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THE Charter . . OF THE . . Church.

SIX LECTURES ON THE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE OF NONCONFORMITY.

BY
P. T. FORSYTH, M.A., D.D.

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CHARTER OF THE CHURCH

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THE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE OF NONCONFORMITY

BY

REV. P. T. FORSYTH M.A. D.D.

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PREFACE.

THESE discourses appear at a time when the eirenical element in them is severely strained by the clerical demand for a new church-rate in the shape of increased public subsidy to Church schools. And an effort toward some understanding of our own spiritual foundation is not unlikely to be submerged in the just irritation thus created. A time of political warfare is not the hour when men's minds readily turn to consider either their own first principles or the enemy's real affinities with themselves. The writer himself would have found it much more difficult to maintain the tone he has here striven to keep if the discourses had not been written before the new Education conflict became acute. And he cannot complain if some minds should find it hard for the present to fit themselves to a charitable and dispassionate treatment of the chief issue. In a crisis it is not our first duty to understand the enemy with careful sympathy. That is but a second duty at such a time; and it must not be allowed to interfere with the first, which is to beat him and make ourselves understood. I hope that the absence of any direct reference to the question of the hour will not rob these

discourses of all worth as a contribution to the object last named.

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The Charter of the Church is not in any saying of Jesus, who, perhaps, never used the word church. It is not a documentary charter at all. Such a textual commission would make the Church what it always tends to be in the hands of those who base it on fiats, documents, and protocols—a chartered company, licensed to exploit the world by means whose ethics are those of an institution rather than a conscience—of an enterprise rather than a cause.

The Church's Charter is the principle incarnate in the eternal and irreducible personality of Christ, and in Him chiefly as crucified. It is the old Reformation principle of free grace, which is the rediscovered soul of the New Testament and the native accent of the Holy Ghost. It is this principle which must guide our new reforming of the Reformation, and keep religious our theological and ecclesiastical completion of a work which was religious or nothing at its source in Luther's mighty miracle of soul.

All religion is a response to revelation; and revelation is real just in proportion as it is free, spontaneous, and autonomous—that is, as it is neither extorted nor discovered, but *given*—given in an act whose nature is absolute unsearchable grace. The ultimate idea of Christianity is neither faith, works, truth, nor love, but grace. Our Christian life is our due response to that. Our faith is simply its human echo; it is God's

redeeming grace returning *through* man upon itself—the Holy Spirit returning to Him who gave it.

According to the freedom of the grace revealed must be the freedom of the answering faith. If grace be absolutely free, so must faith be. If it be redeeming grace, its product must be a redeemed—a liberated faith. If faith obey another power than God's grace; or if it do not deal directly with God's grace, with Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost, it is an enslaved faith—even if it is broad enough to hold all the population and all the heresies. A faith truly free draws its breadth from its height. And for a faith thus loftily free there is but one congenial expression in human society. And that is a Free Church—free in the sense of autonomous, and not in the sense of comprehensive. The freedom of comprehension is only the freedom of culture, not of grace, and, sometimes, hardly of religion.

Culture, æsthetic or even religious, is now the most deadly and subtle enemy of spiritual freedom. It is the growth of culture in the decay of Gospel that the soul's freedom has increasingly to dread. It is there that our Nonconformity is in most danger of being untrue to itself and its mission. We *are* suffering. But it is less from grievance now than from success. We share a prosperity which is passing through variety of interest, refinement of taste, æsthetic emotion, tender pity, kindly careless catholicity, and over-sweet reasonableness, to leanness of soul. It is more at home in literature than in Scripture, and in journals more than either. And it tends to substitute charity and its sympathies for grace and

its faith. These are tendencies of the time which we have not escaped. I cannot measure the extent to which we have been affected by them. I may only say that, if any churches can thrive on them, it is not ours. To us they are not only dangerous, but fatal. Humanism must indeed find a home in grace which it has never occupied yet. But it is another thing when it becomes a church's note.

The Church's changeless note is Grace. The Charter of the Free Churches is Free Grace. And the Free Churches are the inevitable response to that freedom of grace which is the one article of the Gospel and the one source of the Church's being and well-being alike. If that cease to be our note, we must cease to be at all. A redeemed Church must become a Free Church, which is only the inevitable social expression of the freed soul. And, as a National Church is one of the great impediments to missionary success, so an Established Church, uttering as it does law rather than grace or Gospel, is, *quâ* established, in standing contradiction to the first principle of the religion for which it exists.

THE CHARTER OF THE CHURCH.

I.

Our Historic Principle: The Unity, Autonomy, and Continuity of the Church.

"WHY are you of no religion?" says a poet of last century, and he answers himself, "Because of religion." Some use the same plea with far less reason to-day. They say they are too religious to be satisfied with any of the forms of religion that are current.

There was much more justification for the epigram last century than there is this. It sounds a little affected to-day, and is often no more than a mannerism of the æsthetic or literary *élite*. I parody the epigram in another connection. If I am asked why I do not belong to the Established Church, I reply that my chief reason is, because I am such a Churchman—a High Churchman—with such a high ideal of the Church.

I will come back to that, however. I pause for the moment to say that a good reason (though not, perhaps, the deepest) for being a Nonconformist is to have been born and brought up one; and to have had the advantage of a religious education which does not leave the intellect to the world, or the principle of the matter at the mercy of fancy, taste, or fashion.

I observe the levity, and even the frivolity, with which many of the under-educated sons and daughters of the upper middle classes are giving up the order of faith in which they were born and bred. I see them doing it before they are in a position to form a judgment on the subject, doing it out of mere fancy at times, debasing religion even to please a woman, or taking a step which should be so solemn as a change of church just because they will gratify their taste in music. Well, when I see that I am more sorry than usual for the state of religious education, I am sorry that young people are left to pick up convictions out of gossip, novels, newspapers, and light magazines, that religious matters are not taken more gravely, and that church principles are not drawn from the New Testament, bound up with the fundamental principles of deep personal religion, and deduced from them. I object, in what we see going on among some young people to-day, far less to the change of church than to the miserable and frivolous grounds on which it is made.

But I may be asked this question—Is it a sufficient ground for remaining in a particular communion that you were born and brought up in it? I speak only of a permanent removal to another body, not of attendance for the time on a profitable ministry. And I answer, Yes, till *conscience* urge you to another course. Till conscience compel you, you owe more to the Church of your parents than to any other. And the choice of a church *is* a matter of conscience whenever it becomes matter of choice at all. It is a *moral* choice. You may not choose out of mere fancy, liking, taste. Nobody should leave the Church of his fathers but as a matter of duty, with some regret and some sacrifice. "*Spartam nactus es, hanc exorna*"—(Sparta is bequeathed to you, go on to adorn it!)—is an old and worthy maxim. Your religious home

was given you in God's providence. Do your best to improve it. When you *must* go elsewhere, go with the dignity you should have learned there, the dignity that becomes a moral decision, an act of conscience, a guiding of Providence.

This issue of Church and State will soon grow more keen. Let us enter it as fellow Christians, fellow believers, with our true opponents. Let us think often of the names that have made and do make the Established Church lovely and mighty in the service of God's Kingdom. Do not let the pusillanimity of some village cleric, the bigotry of some civic priest (say, on a School Board), or the dull worldliness of churchly fashion irritate the whole of your judgment on a question so great, an institution so venerable, a principle so solemn, as is here involved. Do not descend below the level of a great principle in discussing the matter. There are as good, holy, and devoted consciences on the one side as on the other. There is an immense amount of common tradition, common faith, common brotherhood on both sides. We have common enemies much more deadly to humanity than any issue which parts us. We have a common Lord Who is much more vital to the race than any name or cause that can unite men outside of Him and us. We have a common text-book which we regard with a common reverence, which we study together and adopt as containing our common standard of faith and morals. We have for many centuries a common history. The whole history of the Church up to the Reformation at least is as much ours as theirs. We believe in a church, and in one common inheritance in the historic Church of the West. But do we not agree, further, that there ought to be a national recognition and establishment of Christianity?

Everything turns here on what is meant by establishment.

We recognise that the nation is a unity. It is a moral unity. It has a sanctity. It cannot dispense with a religion. No moral unity can. A nation ought to have a religion, and to give that religion expression. We begin to differ about that expression. Our opponents say it should be the establishment of a church by the State authority. What we say is that that has just been one of the chief causes why the nation has so much less real religion than it should, and so little practical expression of it. It was a national church that slew the universal Christ. You will note that it is one thing to have a church established in law, and another thing to have religion established in a nation's heart and life. The Church would have been a mother to more if it had not been so imperious to all. You will also note that the State authority has no faculty to decide on the form of religion to be established as a church, because it is not a religious body. It has no religious insight, no discrimination of religious truth. We say that the State is not the organ of the nation's religion, but only of the righteousness which is the true political expression of religion. We say the State recognition and establishment of religion should be the practical expression of the spiritual principles prescribed by that religion in social and international affairs. It is national Christian conduct. We say the destruction of war and of social injustice would be a greater, truer State recognition of Christianity than all the established churches that ever were damaged with public property and prestige. The establishment of religion by the State sinks it to the region of the State, the region of social and political relations, of laws, and the spirit of laws, a region only secondarily connected with spiritual life and freedom. We admit the ideal sanctity of the nation, and we assert that the only way to it is religious equality,

which makes national righteousness the equal duty and result of all the religious communities, and not the charge of one alone. As a matter of fact it is not to that one favoured community that this nation owes most of its freedom and power. "It was to the Puritan sect," says Hume, "that the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution." And Mr. Lecky and others tell us the same thing.

So we have some agreement with our opponents on the principle that religion should be established in the public affairs of a nation. We differ when we urge the establishment of Christian righteousness and not of the Christian Church. We claim that the Free Churches have done at least as much, and probably more, for the English State of to-day than the Church which Establishment has, for the greater part of its history, secularised and paralysed. And we claim, as I have said, that the whole history of the Western Church, up to the Reformation at least, is as much ours as our opponents', if we were not so often too ill-informed and narrow in our views to realise the fact.

It is the greatest mistake either to claim, or to allow the claim, that the Established Church is the sole continuation of the great Mediæval Church in this country. Principles which we alone have vindicated lay as deep there as some which they assert, and especially one.

In that great Church there were two principles in particular—*unity and autonomy*, organic unity and spiritual independence, or self-government under Christ. These were ruined, indeed, in practice by the relations between the Mediæval Church and the temporal power. But, by the Reformation and its consequences, these relations were readjusted. You know how they were readjusted in England. The unity of the National Church was preserved. But the unity of the Western—the Catholic Church was

destroyed. Still, unity there was at first within the nation. But at what a price was it won! There was sacrificed for it something far more precious than national unity, or even Roman. It was won by the royal supremacy, which has gradually and inevitably become the supremacy of the State, and finally of Parliament. And to this there was sacrificed what is the very essence of faith, *its* supremacy, *its* autonomy, *its* independence of any power outside itself, its direct dependence on the Spirit, on its Lord.

Do you see how the evangelical position is fatal to the Establishment? how our Nonconformist position is due essentially to our direct, living, New Testament, Protestant idea of faith as the direct obedience of the Christian community to Christ alone? how its root is religious and not political, due to faith, not envy, and to belief in the Church, not hate of it? Now this autonomy did belong to the Roman Church, in principle, at least. Its actual embodied form was corrupt and worldly. This was because the Western Church was captured by the Curia, by the papacy, by the Roman court. It was secularised by the lust of temporal power, and demoralised by possession of it. Still the autonomy was there in principle. But it was destroyed by the connection of Henry VIII. with the English Reformation, and the aristocratic colour his work gave it. Dr. Döllinger tells us that the weakness of the English Reformation showed itself in producing the *aristocratic* State Church, which, by antagonism, necessarily developed from the Christian idea Puritanism and its *democracy*, that the nation might remain Christian by the assertion of a true *spiritual* aristocracy.

The spiritual aristocracy were those who believed in the autonomy of faith, the independence of the Church, its duty to obey Christ speaking by His Spirit among Christian people. For the very sake of His Church's

existence this principle had to be reasserted and realised. This is what was done by the Puritans, the Separatists, and the Nonconformists. They were not always conscious of the vast work they were doing, but God was doing it for His Church through them all the same. We must develop their principle and reform the Reformation. Our enemies would undo it. The Reformers did not mean all the blessings the Reformation has brought us, especially its political and social blessings. It was not done with a supreme regard for the Church's outward organic unity. But that is not a New Testament ideal at all. Yet the Separatists did not act from a love of separation and a hatred of unity. They acted from union with Christ, from a resolve to obey Christ directly; to let Him rule their faith, and so their lives, at any cost—at the cost even, if the dread necessity came, of Church unity. But it was for the sake of something far more precious than unity. It was for the true Reformation principle of the directness and autonomy of faith, for the headship of Christ alone, and not the king, in his Church—a church composed solely of confessors and believers in Him. It was, as the Free Church of Scotland put it in the greatest act of ecclesiastical heroism since 1662, for the "Crown rights of the Redeemer." So I say that if the Established Church has preserved the idea of unity it has not kept the idea of continuity. For it is the Nonconformists that have continued, even at the cost of unity, the far more vital principle of the autonomy of faith, the independence of the Church, its responsibility to Christ alone, that self-government of the Church which was, and is, a real and true principle asserted with a vast consistency always by the Roman Church. It is this reason which moves the best minds who have gone from Anglicanism to Rome. The surrender of it by the English Church has, under the

conditions of Parliamentary control, displayed the true schismatic nature of that Church's existence. The English Reformation was really a far greater act of schism from the true Church principle than any action of the Nonconformists since that day. The Nonconformists at worst but broke the outward unity. The State Church broke the inward principle, and sinned against the nature of faith itself, which is much more than the form of the Church. Puritanism and Nonconformity indeed, by reasserting the idea of the Church's autonomy, made the attempt to repair the schism which the English Church committed by the nature of its Reformation. They reasserted, in more spiritual form, Rome's true but twisted spiritual idea of the Church's independence of the worldly power. With all our protest against Rome, let us remember we share with Rome that great spiritual principle. And let us be just to the Established Church to-day. At the last Church Congress the note of autonomy was singularly prevalent. And it is a most welcome sign, though it did not seem in most cases to mean more than the autonomy of the State in dealing with the Church. But this is an autonomy resented by some of the most spiritual of the Anglicans. They want a true Church autonomy as we do. And it is this impulse and craving of theirs that is at the root of much of their impatience of the Reformation. One does not wonder at their wish to go behind the Reformation *in its English form*, which is all of the Reformation that many of them know. They cannot but be galled by a Protestantism that produced the English State Church, with its royal (and now Parliamentary) control of the Church.

I dwell on this point for two reasons. First, to show that we not only have as deep and legitimate a share in the great current of Church history as our neighbours, but that

we stand for an essential principle which they have surrendered. And second, to urge upon all who have mind and reverence enough to make this question one of conscience, that this principle (of the autonomy of faith, and of the Church as the community of faith) is the master key and brief secret of the whole issue. Settle that, and you are fixed beyond all that can unsettle you—if, I say, the reasons you seek are conscientious and religious, and not merely political, or æsthetic, or fanciful, or social, or otherwise impious or trivial. What is at the root of Nonconformity and its positive principle is the Protestant, Evangelical, Apostolic conception of faith, as the free answer to free grace, with its certainty of personal redemption, its immediate relation to Christ, and its freedom of theological progress. It is in that interest and on that principle that this question must be settled.

The State, which, however sacred, is less than Christian, must not come between Christ's will and the Church's perception of it in the ordering of the Church. The society of faith must not be controlled by the men of mere policy. The fellowship of the Spirit must not be ruled by the exigencies of the world; nor the brotherhood of eternity by the interests of the passing hour. The freedom of grace (say in public prayer) must not be regulated by reasons of State or by parliaments of the natural man.

If Nonconformity has become weakened for the time, it is because Christianity has become with so many merely a religion and not a gospel. It is an ideal and not a power, a charity and not a faith. It only expresses their best selves; it does not save them from themselves, and snatch them by the very hair from the burning marl, the miry clay, or the crumbling edge of the pit. I have marvelled, and more than marvelled, to find Christianity described by a very able prelate as little more than imitat-

ing and obeying Christ. As if faith did not mean that we owe Him life even before allegiance; as if it did not mean something passionate in the owing of ourselves, and the committal of our whole selves in Redemption to Christ for ever and ever.

If I am asked, therefore, why we are Nonconformists, I answer that it is chiefly because we are Churchmen, because we believe intensely in the Church and the supremacy of the *faith* which constitutes the Church and makes it the highest society upon earth. My own leading motive at least is not political. That is a real motive, and I give it free play. So long as the Premier appoints the bishops, and they sit, as bishops, in the House of Lords, we must be political on occasion. So long as the Church is so solid on one side, and the monopolist side, we are forced to fight on the political ground which our adversaries, and not we, have chosen. So long as Establishment is treated as a question of endowment *chiefly—i.e.*, of property (which *we* don't want)—we must use political means on occasion. But I should refuse to deal with a great *religious* institution upon political grounds alone or chiefly. It would be doing just what I object that the principle of Establishment does. It would be settling a great religious question upon political principles or expediences. I am no more sympathetic with the politicians who would disestablish the Church upon merely political grounds than with those who, like Lord Rosebery, would establish it on these grounds. It was not politics that produced Nonconformity, and it is not politics that can perfect it. If an Established Church were the clear will of Christ, any sense of political injustice would have to be educated into submission. The question is a religious one, and must be settled on religious principles. I much doubt if any but the religious

Nonconformists will be able to effect Disestablishment. If the clergy became, like so many of the High Churchmen, socialistic in sympathy, if they became sympathetic with the working class in their social aims, then the working class, as such, would not maintain our objection to the Establishment. It is the wealthiest and best staffed of the philanthropic societies, doing a vast amount of a popular kind of good by visitation of houses and help of the poor. And the non-religious democracy will say (as the *Chronicle* cynically said) that it cares nothing for the theology of the case (for which the Church supremely cares), but is glad to have an educated, charitable, and sympathetic gentleman on the side of religion and labour as a State official in each parish. It is hard to see how a spiritual Churchman could accept a position which trades on the most sacred portion of his faith for its utility alone. But, indeed, there is perhaps little chance of Disestablishment till we become somewhat disillusioned with some hopes from the present Social Gospel. In this inevitable disappointment room may be made for a new and really religious revival, both springing deeper and searching deeper in the public soul than the ardours of the visible Kingdom. The true reconstruction of the Kingdom, and its due disentanglement from the Church or the State, will be less by the imperative re-reading of the teachings of Jesus than by the reviving of the power of His Cross—whether by a great prophet, a great movement, or a great calamity. Harm has been done to our cause by some who have espoused it only for reasons lower than religious. Much mischief has been done by the cry, "Down with the Church!" I do not want to cast down the Church. It would be the greatest loss England ever had since she lost the Commonwealth. It is not a case of pulling down one church or of putting up another. There is no other single church to

put up. There is no Nonconformist Church. Nonconformity, like Protestantism itself, is not a church, but a principle re-making churches. It is a group of churches on the same footing—as all churches should be. But churches they are. If that be denied, we can hardly deal with the denier. He is on the way to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and only the Holy Ghost can deal with him. Our Nonconformist communities are churches by the grace of God. They are to be recognised as such in the same way as Paul's Gentile churches were by the timid Apostles—by their Christian results, by the manifest effect of the grace of God in them, by the palpable presence of the Holy Ghost. What wise man will venture, for instance, to deny the name and reality of churches to those Nonconformist bodies to whom, and not to the Established Church, this amazing century of foreign missions is originally due? I know no other basis for any church than this manifest grace of Christ. It is surer than many a link in the chain of Apostolic Succession.

We care much for the Church—the election of grace in all the churches. It is for the sake of Christ's Church that we want to see a certain Church disestablished and disendowed—yea, for its own sake. As the most powerful of the churches, it is bound to share in the common prosperity of freedom. If any challenge the sincerity of this wish, he is not at the stage of Christian culture and temper with which it is very profitable to deal. I am sure that the establishment of the Church has been one of the great reasons why the Christian faith has not done more in this country than it has; why our ethics are still so pagan—Roman or Stoic; why the Church so established is weak, according to its prestige, and why it has had to have so much of its work done by other communities. Wherever you have establishment the State has secularised

the Church more than the Church has spiritualised the State. The State has unchurched the Church more than the Church has moralised or sanctified the State. Is it to the Established or the Free Church that we owe most of the undeniable exaltation of public life in this age? I am certain that in many cases our desire for Disestablishment is a self-denying ordinance. For when that takes place it will be numerically the severest blow that has been struck at the other churches since they began. They have prospered, first because they were persecuted, then because they were free. Set the Episcopal Church—which has thriven so much on our "persecution"—free; give her equal advantages in the Christian rivalry; let her come down among the sister churches as a sister—the eldest, loveliest of them all perhaps—let her cast off that position of privilege and unholy pride of superiority, that solemn, deadly farce of not recognising us whom God has so palpably blessed; then with her history, her prestige, her deep foundation in our social life, her learning, her charm, her organisation, her devoted disciples, she will take a place in the Kingdom of God which she has not to-day, and never will have till she is a sister indeed. She is not the Kingdom of God. She is only a great contributary state of that Kingdom which is the home and mother of us all, and which needs us all, and is not ashamed, with her Lord, to own us all and call us all brethren.

II.

Our Root is Religious—in Faith and Free Grace.

In these discourses it may be seen I am not starting with texts, which on such a subject do not convince, because they are accepted by both sides and variously interpreted according to some ruling idea. We must deal with this ruling power, with the principle of religion, the genius of Christianity, the will of Christ, the implications of grace, the idea of faith, the nature of its freedom, the soul of history, and the lessons of European experience and of English in particular.

This is an age of revived religious and historical interest. Faith, it is demanded, should be not only vivid for the present, but, in principle, continuous for the past. It will be increasingly impossible to dissociate it from the idea of a Church. It is in its historic and not merely its individual form that we see the distinctive revival of religion to-day. It is a revival of the Church idea.

But it is also a time when religious Nonconformity seems to be losing ground. I am not speaking of political Nonconformity and its electoral rebuffs. I speak of religious. And I express an opinion which is far from being mine alone, and to which our stated assemblies might profitably give more earnest and honest heed. The difficulties about mission funds, home missions in particular, are only symptoms of a state of things far deeper and graver than can be dealt with by any means yet used, or by any such.

Now, the two facts, the historic advance and the Nonconformist decline, may be connected. I believe they are, and that a great reason for our wane is that we have not kept touch, to the measure of our genius and tradition, with the religious-historical revival. This is an intensely political age, and we have not lost touch there. It is an age of social ferments and enthusiasms, thank God; and we have tried, with the best intentions, though with less success, to seize it there. But it is a question if we have grasped it by the historic soul, as the successful side of the Established Church has largely done. We Congregationalists, at least, with all our appeals to history, have not appealed as we might to the historic imagination. We go back upon the heroisms of two or three centuries; but what is that compared with the impressive claim we might make to be involved in the spiritual history of two millenniums? * We have succeeded, by some misfortune or neglect, in conveying the impression that we do not believe in a church, and so are indifferent to the religion of history; or even that we are hostile to the Establishment as a church, and so have no practical concern with the history of our religion. We are supposed by some to care nothing for Church history between the New Testament and the Reformation, to find no fraternity or patrimony there, to have no place, and to claim none, in the continuity of the historic Holy Ghost; and especially to grudge those glories and blessings in the Establishment which we cannot deny. One able Churchman feels free to speak of us as, in our friendliest hours, hiding a knife meant for his bosom as a Churchman. What have we done, or omitted, to be thus thought of? What is his excuse for this culpable misrepresentation?

* See Lectures V. and VI.

Do we take our Church theory in earnest, in thought and practice? The future is with those to whom a true conception of the Church is most of a reality. We believe our conception of the Church is the truer. Well, is it less or more of a practical reality to us than the other conception is to our opponents? Do we believe in our Church to the extent they do in theirs? Does it lay hold of us, our imagination, our affections, our energies, our devotion, as theirs does? If it does not, is it hard to account for our being left behind? Any way, we have become credited with a practical loss of faith in the Church idea.

Allowing for all the sin, original, acquired, or invincible, in our opponents, is there anything we can mend in ourselves? Have we lost anything in our own principle, or neglected to develop from it something it contains eager to be released for the service of the time? And are we being punished for the neglect? One may be pardoned the questions, even if they provoke uneasy answers. And I may confess that I am less sanguine about our future whenever events remind me of the bald and *borné* Zwinglianism which marks the spiritual habit of so large a section among us on matters like the Sacraments. We quench the mystery and we lose the spell.

But I want to bear round to our free basis in grace. An inferior sort of Churchman thanks us ironically for our liberating interest in his Church, but regards us as impertinent when not malicious, and begs us to mind our own business and not meddle in an emancipation he feels no need of. Dr. Story, as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Scotch Church in May, 1894, called us hyprocrites and Tartuffes for this interest in its freedom; and, by a severe nemesis, Lord Salisbury found that the

only part of the Moderator's speech he was inclined to quote a few days later.

This is foolish, passionate, and unholy. In the first place, on the mere political ground, the Establishment is *our* Church in so far as it has the favour of our common State or any portion of our common funds. We have the right of practical interest in any institution which consents to take our support. Besides, the theory of an Erastian or Parliamentary Church is that it is no section of the nation, but the nation itself organised for its religious purposes. It is a theory we do not share, but it closes our Erastian friend's mouth when we discuss his Church.

But we take higher grounds, as you have seen. We have a right and duty to intervene in such a matter, not because the Church is *ours*, but because we are the Church's. We are of Christ's confessors in this land. We are of the body of Christ's faithful, preaching His Word and keeping His sacraments. We act, chiefly, not for political, but for religious reasons. It is not a question of the position of a particular church, but of the whole position and godly influence of New Testament Christianity in English life. It is a question of the influence of Christ's Church in the English future. It is a question of the influence of Christ Himself in England: for Christ's future is His Church's future in every land. Our position, indeed, so far as this question is concerned, is the position of the younger men of the High Church party within the Anglican Church itself. We oppose that party on many points; but, to do them justice, they are feeling keenly the bondage and damage to spiritual religion by the establishment of the Church. One of them said, some time ago: "Surely a Church party ought to be something more than a committee for the safe custody of the endowments and emoluments

of the Church." I much regret their ignorance of the best spirit among us. It is a pity that they seem in so many cases to see nothing more in Nonconformity than religious self-will or political dissent. I marvel that they know so little of history as to be ignorant that it was living faith that called us into being, and that it is living faith, as vital as theirs, which is the citadel of our position. Without that we deserve all their distrust. What keeps us alive is the religious motive. A book of great ability on this question was translated from the French a year or two ago under the auspices of the High Church party.* There the utmost stress is laid upon this principle, which is given in these terms: "The necessary condition of religious progress is the separation of Church and State, effected not in hostility to, but in favour of, religion."

We agree with these words. How is it that the eyes of such Anglicans never seem to rest for a sympathetic moment on us in this common contention? They stray always to Rome. And at Rome the Church is the footstool of a monarchical Pope, who accounts as persecution the loss of a State power which neither Christ nor the Apostles had or sought, but seemed to dread if not to forbid. We can only lament that the ideas of the High Church party about English Nonconformity seem no deeper or more sympathetic than they can gather from what comes under the notice of the Press. If they will not themselves enter our places of worship, nor suffer those that would to enter, they might at least know something about us in our classic literature.

I will add another quotation from his preface to this book by the Oxford translator: "Disestablishment now

* *Religion.* By Molinari. Translated by Firminger. Sonnenschein. 1894.

appears as inevitable; the question only remains with which of the three parties the drafting of the measure will lie." He specifies these as the mere Secularists, the political Nonconformists, and the Radical High Churchmen, who, he says, desire to "secure liberty for a State-ridden Church."

Yes; to establish religion we must disestablish the Church. But it may be said, and is said, that the Church was never established by the State, and that their relation is the result of historical evolution. Well, it seems to me that the Act of Uniformity alone was a distinct selection and establishment by the State of a particular form of faith. But if the Establishment is defended as the result of a selection Diviner than the State's, working by historic evolution, the answer is—first, that the same argument makes a better defence of Romanism; and, second, that an evolved relation, so far as evolved, is all the less likely to be a final or permanent one. It may be respected, but not consecrated for ever. It is a stage which must surely be outgrown in the growth of both Christianity and the democracy; unless, indeed, you can show any special reason for considering this the final stage, and the *absolutely* right relation, when judged by social results and Christian principle—which cannot be done.

And the present state of things is incompatible with the evolution of both democracy and Christianity.

1. It does not consist with democracy. For the democracy will increasingly refuse privilege without control. It will demand even more subjection of the Church to Parliament than is the case at present, in return for the amount of monopoly. Many Churchmen see this, and some have given dark hints of a possible recourse to the power of the Crown to protect the

Church from the tyranny of Parliament; that is, rather than accept the release of Disestablishment, they meditate the risk of civil war.

2. It does not consist with Christianity. For as the Christian spirit grows it will increasingly resent control by any but a distinctly Christian power. It will demand the right to govern itself. It will demand what the new High Churchmen are demanding along with us in the supreme interests of the Church—Disestablishment. And are there any who really think that that can come without some measure of disendowment?

Our Church friends properly resent the control of the Church by what might be a godless democracy. (History past and present lets them think the Throne godlier!) It would be, they feel, the submission of the Church to the world, and finally the ruin of the Church at the hands of the temporal power. But they might be asked to consider whether to fight the democracy for Church property, which the democracy claims to be national property, be not also a sacrifice of the spiritual *influence* of the Church to temporal prestige and *force*. A church might go to law with an individual who stole its property, and suffer little. But for a national Church to fight the national representatives for what they honestly believe to be national property is hardly the way to establish the Church in the democratic heart and the national affection. No church could ever hope to be national which abandoned its spiritual influence to secure its material rights by setting one Estate of the Realm against another.

A church fighting for its pecuniary position is no doubt within its legal and even its moral rights as far as natural rights go. But it is never upon natural rights that the Church has lived or can live. Its greatest, most vital, and most fertile movements have begun where natural rights

ended, amid poverty, duty, sacrifice, and spiritual grandeur. It was so in the beginning of Christianity. It was so with the monastic orders—being voluntary in their origin and nature—which saved the mediæval Church. It was so with the Nonconformist Ejection, which saved religion in England. It was so among the early Methodists, who saved it again. It was so in the Free Church of Scotland at the Disruption of 1843. Surely, many of our opponents are too good students of history not in time to learn the truth of what De Tocqueville says: "By diminishing the apparent *force* of a religion we increase its real *power*." "In uniting herself to different political powers Religion contracts a burdensome bond. She has no need of their help to support her own life; and in serving them she may lose her vitality."

Our friends plead that they do not want endowments for the sake of wealth; and I believe them. They want them as a means of doing their religious and Christian work in the practical conditions of actual life, just as we ourselves must have money to carry on. I do not for a moment accuse our brethren of unworthy motives. We may at present neglect those of them that have such, as I wish they would neglect the lower motives to be found among us. Let the Press pillory cases of petty bigotry as they occur. Light and air are much dreaded by the ecclesiastical valetudinarians and very dry nurses who rule parishes like small boarding schools or *crèches*. But on serious occasions, when we face the real issues and principles of the position, let us avoid recrimination and insinuation and interpretation for the worse. Such remarks always seem to bear about the image of their maker, and stamp him. I want to hear no more talk on our side about clinging to the loaves and the fishes; and I want to hear no more from theirs about spoliation and robbery. It is all so vulgar,

so politically stagey and platformal. Let us part company just now with the stupid, the strident, and the vulgar on both sides. Let us gladly recognise that the men of whom we must take most account in this grave discussion are men who want funds for the reason we want them—for God's work. We say: "Give us money, or that work will suffer." So do they, and they must have what is indubitably their own—for instance, by specific gift or bequest. But is there not a great difference in the form of our appeal? We say: "Give us—of your free will give us, of your Christian generosity give us, of your Christian gratitude give us, out of your free hand, freed by free grace, give us —what we periodically need for God's work." But does the Established Church not say by its constitution—not necessarily in the spirit of its individuals, for a vicar may do it against the grain, as faithful trustee of a stewardship he must transmit unhurt—"Give us legal power to take. Give us a Parliamentary position, our tithes, and right and force to recover. Give us a privileged position. Give us, though we are a section, a monopoly of the State-aid and favour which *all* combine to furnish. It is true we do but half, or less, of the religious work of the nation, and represent but a portion of its creed, but give us, and us alone, the funds and favour which were given at first on condition of doing the whole work and representing the common belief."

Is there not a vast difference in the manner of the appeal, though the object of it is honestly and ardently the common work of Christ and God? It is all the difference between a voluntary and a coercive religion, between Christian and pagan methods.

The truth is, our brethren suffer from a traditional and ecclesiastical form of what affects most of us in one form or another—unfaith in the grace of God. I know liberal-

minded members of the Established Church who support the control by the State on the ground that otherwise the Church would either fly in pieces or would become so strong as to be a menace to the nation. This last plea always seems to me the revelation of a profound, if unconscious, scepticism. It is an extraordinary thing to hear from Christian men that we need the hand of the State to protect the nation, which they call an ordinance of God, from the community of God's grace and the society of the Holy Ghost. It is surely a renunciation of faith in Christ's power to control His Church for human blessing, and a confession of the intractability of the Church concerned to the influence of the Holy Ghost. But, of course, they cannot take both of the grounds I named. If the removal of State control would let the Church collapse in its native antagonisms, then there can be no such unity as would make it a national danger. And if its unity is so great as to make it a national danger, unless led in a chain by Parliament, then the State bond is not required to give it unity—but only to keep its Divine unity out of mischief. But these are political, perhaps, more than religious considerations. They become a statesman of expedients rather than a Christian of principles. I do not rely here on that class of considerations. I am not making a political speech, or appealing to political interest or sagacity. If I were, I should meet my friend on his own ground, his own class of considerations, and urge him, as Liberal politicians so often do, and as he used sometimes to do till lately, to trust the people. But then I should lay myself open to this reply: "I am willing to trust the people for what concerns their worldly interests, their self-interest, for mere fairplay, for some generosity, for good sense and good feeling in the long run, for all that enters into the ordinary kind of political

question, and is urged by the best of the Press. But this is another matter, and stands on quite a different footing. Religion is not an affair of the natural man. He is opposed to religion, and all the more so the more religious it is, the more Christian, the more lofty, severe, and commanding it is. He will not support what he does not care for. It must be supported through him, but in spite of him, till he does care for it. He begins by not caring. In the majority he goes on not to care for it. How can I trust him with the fortunes of an institution which is bound to take up a position so often hostile to his lower, his favourite, his mere natural tastes and interests?" I might get that reply, and be told that the establishment of religion gives it a position of independence in which it can take the proper tone of both sympathy and command towards the mere mass of natural men, while it is educating them to consent. Well, to that reply I might retort that it rests on a delusion which the course of events will soon expose. For the establishment of a Church under Parliamentary government just means that those very people, the mass of voters, are by their representatives put in final control of the Church. It is ruled by the very power it cannot trust in spiritual things. It cannot alter its Prayer Book, or appoint its spiritual heads, without the consent of this very element which it suspects and must be fortified against. And so far as mere retort goes this might be fairly effective perhaps.

But I do not pursue the political line. I will not take the politician's maxim of "Trust the people." I am ready to use it in its place, but I do not use it here. It is not the battle-cry of the New Testament. It is not the principle of the Christian religion as religion. It may be deducible from the New Testament, but it is not the cry with which the Apostles went out to establish the Church in the world.

The cry and principle to take is what an Apostolic and Evangelical Christianity always has taken. It is, *Trust the Grace of God and its action on the people.* Trust the Gospel. Seek first the Kingdom, and all else shall be added to you. The Christian principle is not "Trust the people for the Gospel" so much as "Trust the Gospel for the people." An Evangelical people will not fail the Evangel. That is the principle of true voluntaryism. Voluntaryism is not a political principle or even a moral but a religious. Its key-word is not free will, but free grace, and the free response compelled by free grace. For the support of the Gospel by the people trust the support of the people by the Gospel. To that the people will rise. They will not rise to support learning or mere freedom of thought. Let learning be provided for by endowments. Establish education. That is both needful and fit. But the ministry of the Gospel should live by the Gospel. Visit the villages, and learn what they have done, and under terrible stress can do. Study the history of the Free Churches—look at Scotland, Wales. The work of God will not lack means if we are right about the Gospel of God. I do trust the free response of human nature to the free Gospel of God. But when I see what is sometimes offered for the Gospel, I do not wonder that the response has often been poor and grudging. It is poor among ourselves when a taste for mere theological or political freedom has taken the place of the passion which rises to meet free grace. When I see how the claim is put, in an Established Church especially, and how the system itself discourages free giving and free initiative on the part of those who are asked to give, how can I wonder that the grace of giving becomes a lost art and perishes by disuse? The support of the Church then becomes a case of social or racial prestige, of police, process, and dragoons.

It is of no use to point us to cases in which an Established Church seems to work well. Its long results are not well. Its Christian work in England has been saved by other hands—by the Free Churches, which have worked equally well as far as results go, and better as far as opportunities go. But it is not a case of results or utilities, but of principles. That is the point, so unwelcome to the present socialised and secularised temper of many who find us useful, but whose inmost sympathy fails us, and whose support imperils us—that is the point I want to press. The relation of the Church to the State is not to be settled by its social achievements, utilities, or sympathies. Judged by that test, we Nonconformists have neither a chance nor a mission compared with churches of high organisation, great wealth, and social experience. Our social power is not the direct but the secondary result of that conception of faith which makes us Nonconformists. However Establishment may seem to work at a given time, *the thing is wrong*. Taken to the New Testament, the thing is wrong. We are not left to grope among probable utilities. We have a standard of the Spirit's will in this matter. The thing is incompatible with the nature of Christian truth, grace, and faith. Therefore, in the last result, it cannot work well. The free grace and free faith of the New Testament are as fatal to the ecclesiastical power of the Premier as to that of the Priest. Free grace, the cry of the Reformation, the Word of the Gospel, is the charter of the Free Churches. For my own part, any doubt of the truth of our Nonconformist principles would mean doubt of the truth of what is most distinctive in Christianity itself—free faith, free action, and free giving, as the response of men who have been moved and changed and controlled by the free gift of God and grace in Jesus Christ.

III.

Faith Demands a Church—but Catholic, not Monopolist.

I DO not wish these discourses to wear the look of an attack. I do my best never to forget that our opponents are our Christian brethren; and I give my addresses from the pulpit. They are for the use and instruction of those whom it is my duty to serve and instruct in the course of my ministry. There must be principles in our common Christianity which decide even a vast, old issue like this. Their truth should protect us from our passions; and these principles are bound to make their way. Let us seek them. It is only from principles that we can hope for reunion. Kindly feeling has its chief use in making the discussion of principles possible. And reunion must come from *Church* principles, from belief in a Church, from loftier, more spiritual, and more imperative views of what a Church is and involves. Our Nonconformity is the refusal *of churches* to conform to a State. It is not the renunciation of a Church. And one reason why the Anglicans pass us by in their thoughts of reunion, and go to Russia and to Rome, is that they cannot or will not see that we are Churches, or more than religious orders, with the like relation to them that the Salvation Army has (by its own wish) to us. They must revise their idea of a Church, and we must revive ours; and especially we must recall the note of sanctity and reality in our Church idea and procedure.

I have said that we are Nonconformist because we

believe in the sanctity and self-government of the Church, which again springs from the autonomy of the community's faith, its inability to take its control from the world, its personal connection with Christ, and its responsibility to the will of Christ. The freedom of the Church flows from the freedom of faith; and the freedom of faith flows from the freedom of grace and access in Jesus Christ. The freedom of grace and intercourse in Christ forbids any inferior power to come between Christ and the soul. Where there is such a power grace is not free; that is, the soul is free in its faith from all obedience but the obedience to Christ. I cannot urge too strongly that the freedom of our Free Churches is not freedom to act or worship as each man pleases. We are not free to force our own will upon a church, to leave it if we do not get our will; to join a church for any reason we like, or to retire from it at our own pleasure or caprice. There is a sin of schism, and in our churches it has been our bane. We are free, but only to be the more bound by Christ's will and cause. We are free to leave a church only under an urging as really from Christ as what led us in young-eyed faith to join. We are free from unspiritual control for spiritual purposes. We are not individualists, but members of Christ, and of each other in Christ. We are only free to carry out His intentions and follow His sure, irresistible guidance. If Christ ordained a power to act for Him on the soul, the soul must obey that power. If the Pope, the Church, the bishop received from Christ this prerogative, then the soul must obey these in its obedience to Christ. If the State got from Christ that power, we must, in things of the soul, obey even the State; we must allow the State to prescribe the spiritual limits of the Church, and to regulate the

Church's worship. If the State got that power, we must surrender our claim to freedom of worship, and especially our characteristic freedom and option of free prayer, with or without liturgical help. We must pray in our Christian communities as the Government, by its Public Worship Regulation Acts, may resolve, not as the Spirit in the prayerful community moves. Or, rather, if Christ gave the State this power, the Spirit's true movement must be to urge us to obey these Parliamentary regulations in our very prayers. And then public prayers outside the rubric of the State's prayer-book, or the instruction of the State's bishop, would not be agreeable to Christ's Spirit.

But in the New Testament there is neither a State Church, nor any principle which of itself would develop into a State Church. It is there neither in fact nor in idea. It is a pagan idea planted on the Church from without. It did not grow out of the inward faith which made the Church. It is Imperial Rome's idea mastering the Spirit; it is not the Spirit which mastered Imperial Rome. It was an Emperor's idea, and not an Apostle's. It was the capture of the inexperienced Church by that idea of empire so deep in the mind of the Jew no less than the Roman. It was at the bottom the idea which, embodied in the Judaism of the day, really slew Christ, as ever since it would have slain His Holy Spirit were the Spirit of less immortal and invincible strain. A State Church represents the capture of Catholicism by Imperialism, a spiritual universality by a political. The worldly State is always eager to use the Church, as the Pharisees seemed willing at the outset to take Christ up and use Him; and it claims often the right to select any church and establish it, if its interests point that way. Well, the State may try what it pleases in that

direction, but no church could accept the position except at the cost of its self-respect and its fidelity to Christ. I say the idea is pagan — and pagan, not in a sense supplementary to Christianity (like the finer Stoicism), but utterly hostile to it. In paganism, religion has always been an affair of State. And paganism found no church lofty enough to look down on its proposals and resent its control till Christianity came. And even Christianity did not stand out long. The pagan taint was too deep in the mind of the age. We are only now completing, in the Spirit's hand, by our Nonconformity, the work arrested by Constantine and resumed at the Reformation.

We can feel how hard the work is by some experiences to-day, which bring home to us the seductive way in which the Church, with good sympathies but bad insight, let itself be established by the power of the time and the political spirit of the age. I have no doubt it was for the sake of Christ and the world that the Church consented to make the arrangement it did with Constantine. But the then Church was like a pushing and prosperous young business; it understood the utilities of the world better than the principles of the Gospel. It prized the Gospel, but it understood the world better; it understood the world's way with the Gospel better than the Gospel's way with the world. It was dazzled with what the Empire could do for Christ, and blinded to the real work Christ was doing for the world. Well, we can feel, I say, to how strong a temptation the old Church succumbed when we weigh the appeals made to us by public parties in modern history. Each party in the State has, in turn, striven to secure and control so useful an agent as the Church, without owning the control of its spirit. And there has risen to-day another party with like aims—the Labour or Socialist

party. We have many sympathies with it; as, indeed, we have with the whole democratic movement. For that owes its steadiest progress, its best results, and its chief heroes to ourselves. But one thing may suggest caution. This party is very eager to draw the Church wholly to its side, to capture the Church for social and material reform. It lays hold of some principles in Christianity which make for its view, just as Whig and Tory have done before. It isolates these principles, tears them out of the perspective of faith, presses them, and tells us even that we are not Christians if we do not come over and help it *as churches*. It threatens to have nothing to do with churches if we do not. It wants, that is, to establish us, to take us into its service and pay us with its patronage; else it will neglect us. In the spirit of State Socialism, it wants to take the religious industry and exploit it in the public interest. In the spirit of the State Church, it would identify Christianity with a particular form of civic organisation, a particular social system. And some of us are afraid that if we do not accept the terms the working man will be lost to Christianity. But the Church is more necessary to the working class than the working class, as a class, is to the Church. The Church can, and must, give them more than it can get from them, and it has demands which are not included in their ideals, and which, like the rest of human nature, they are apt to resent. The Church has, indeed, been on too good terms with the reigning power, whether the monarch or the capitalist. But it can also be on too good terms with the reigning democracy, and not rebuke the new monarch more faithfully than his newspapers do.

The chief danger of the Church is always being on too good terms with human nature. The future of Christianity does not depend on its service to any class in particular,

or any party. To make it so is to enslave the Church. But you see how likely the Church is, with its powerful organisation and immense influence over life, to be wooed, captured, and secularised by the sectional interest which happens to be uppermost—labour to-day, as yesterday it was capital, and the Throne the day before. You see how easy it may be for it, with good meaning but bad sight, to be deluded into taking law where it ought to give it, and assigning itself to parties who have no idea whatever of owning its true power, or obeying any of the distinctive, inmost, and supreme demands of Christ, especially the first calls for faith and repentance.

When I speak of the Church, I mean, of course, the true Catholic Church, the Church of Christ, the Church in all the Churches, the community of the faithful. But there are some who will dispute our right to use the word Catholic in any such sense. For them the Catholic Church means a particular organisation, or, especially, the Church which has the episcopate—to the exclusion, therefore, of all the Presbyterian and all the Congregational churches. The Methodists would mainly fall under the Presbyterian heads, so that from the Catholic Church would be excluded the great mass of the churches of the democracy, the Lutheran and Calvinistic churches abroad, and, indeed, all the churches of the Reformation.

Now, remember that the word catholic really means universal, and you will see that if it is to be reserved for only those churches which have the benefit of the episcopal succession it has totally changed its meaning. Such a limitation is not catholic either in fact or in idea. It is not catholic in fact, *actually*. It is not the Church everywhere. And it is not catholic *in idea*. It might, of course, be catholic in idea only, and yet keep the name, believing that one day it will cover the whole Christian world. On

this principle we call christianity the catholic religion, because though it does not yet cover mankind, its genius, idea, power, promise, and fulfilment is to do so. But to say that only an episcopal church can be a catholic church is as untrue to the Catholic idea as it would be to say that the only form of government for which God created man is a monarchy. The Divine right of kings is dead. We can trace the origin and growth of the superstition. We have heard it fall with the thud of a king's head. But the Divine right of bishops survives, and has lately had a rally. But we can trace the origin and progress of this error too. And it will fall without such awful sound. The axe is laid to its historic root. The historic climate into which the scientific scholarship of the Church is passing does not favour the claim. The growth of Christian sympathies, too, is against it. And it also will pass, or live on only in the modified form of a Divine utility—belonging not to the Church's being, but only to its well-being in special conditions.

The correct name for the Church which limits the true Church to a particular community is not the Catholic, but the *Monopolist* Church. No church has a right to the name Catholic if it insists on unchurching all others which are not episcopal or established by the State. It is only *Monopolist*. The true catholicity is to recognise the Church in every community where the pure word of the Gospel is preached and the sacraments duly administered as its expressions. "Grace be with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth." It is an Apostolic benediction. Why do we hear it so seldom from the Apostles' successors? Why is the validity of Paul's sacramental grace so often denied?

What we really have at the present moment is two great orders of churches:—

(1) The monopolist, imperial, or sectarian.

(2) The free, fraternal, or true.

Or, if we call any true Church catholic in virtue of its share in the catholicity of Christ, then we have these two classes thus described :—

(1) The monopolist, imperial, or sectarian Catholics, represented by Romanism and Anglicanism. These tend to make faith an institutional rather than an intuitional thing. They make external unity primary, and in its interest they would *impose* on Christendom from without an organisation which is but one of many forms that have all received alike the blessing of God. That is sectarian monopoly. It is, as I have said, a Roman and pagan legacy, a survival of the Imperial spirit which made old Rome claim the monopoly of the world's empire. It is Virgil leading Dante. It is that rather than a fruit of the piercing, all-pervading, all-subduing Spirit which mastered Rome itself by a totally different method, according to the work of the Holy Ghost upon the inner natural man.

(2) The free or fraternal Catholics, fraternal as distinct from imperial. These put faith first, and organic unity only second as an external and derivative thing. They care less for a unity imposed on the Church from without on the model of a pagan monarchical State. They care much for the unity that grows up gradually from within, from the inevitable nature of a faith in a common Saviour and in a common grace, the unity of the spirit of love, comity, and mutual respect.

I agree, indeed, with Canon Scott-Holland when he says, in his volume on "The City and the Kingdom," that faith and a church are "inseparable by their normal nature." "To believe in Jesus," he says (p. 18), "is to have by that very same act believed in the Christian Church." "Faith in Jesus is the act by which a believer

passes into the Church. It is inconceivable as a lonely act of a solitary soul." That, I think, is in a great sense, a spiritual sense, true; and it puts an end to that individualism in religion which, after some precious service, has turned to atomism, political or pietist, and which is apt to become such a curse to us Nonconformists and Independents. A man is saved, not as a unit, but as a member of a community. It was a race that Christ redeemed, and souls as members of it. And He redeemed men into a Kingdom whose grace the units can but share, and whose covenant they can but inherit. The very act of faith in Christ places a man by its ideal nature in a community of believers, *which he must serve, else his faith decays*. No man can fully believe in Christ who refuses association with some Christian community. There are no unattached Christians in the Christian idea. The act of faith is not the act of an atom, but of a social unit. Faith is not the act of an atom to an atom. It is not the act of a lone individual towards another lone individual, however great and good. That way lies the leanest Socinianism. It is the act of a social unit towards One who is the unity of his society, who is much more than an individual at the head of a chain, or at the centre of a group, of believing individuals. Christ is no mere unit in saving, and by our faith in Him we can be no mere units in being saved. He is, first, the member of a manifold and social Godhead—the Trinity. And He is, second, the life, soul, and spirit of a varied and social Kingdom which is knit by spiritual relations, and in which a lone individual would be like grit in a watch. Faith in such a Saviour cannot be atomic, however personal. It excludes the individualism of the individual. By its very nature it disowns the man who disowns Christian relations with men in Christ. It is the act of an individual who in the act

ceases to be a mere individual, and who like a cell of the body dies when isolated from the organism which is its life.

But in accepting these words of Canon Scott-Holland we must stipulate that by "the Church" we shall not mean his Church alone, or any Church of his order alone. The words are true in the sense which would have made Crusoe, converted by the Bible on his island, in the act of faith, and by faith's implicit nature, a member of the unseen community of Christ. Or they are true in regard to the Church visible only if by the Church we mean any true community of Christians preaching and obeying the Gospel, constituted on the New Testament basis of saving faith in Jesus Christ and real, experienced relations with Him. It *is* the nature of faith to place the believer in a Christian community. It is not its necessary nature to place him in an episcopal community alone. Faith *does* involve organisation. Faith fades without a community, and you cannot have a community without some degree of organisation, high or low. But faith does not mean one organisation only, or one type. It would be contrary to the nature of faith and the spiritual universality of Christ for even a whole nation of the most believing men to attach the prestige or aid of their civic community to any single one of the many organisations for which their Christian faith is free. How much more contrary to faith's nature is it to receive such prestige and aid from a State which is largely composed of men who are not personal believers at all.

In closing this discourse let me put the matter from another aspect. The difference between the two great ideas of the Church rests on a deeper difference—a difference between two ideas, or at any rate two types of faith. I am not speaking now of the faith of individuals.

There are plenty of individuals on each side whose faith it would be invidious to compare, and whom it is better to admire. But I am speaking of the type of faith that marks the communions as an historic whole. The grand difference between Romanism and Protestantism turns on the type of faith that marks each in its confessions, its history, its leading spirits, and its distinctive genius. In the one there is put first direct relation between the soul and the Saviour; in the other there is demanded first an intermediary faith—a faith in the Church. The Church becomes an object of faith indeed. Now, in the Church of England, which is in its nature a compromise, we find this difficulty—that it based its claim to be national on having no single distinct type of faith, but on being comprehensive; whereas now that it has won national place, power, and affection, it is taking quite other ground, and is absorbing all other types in the interest of one. The Evangelical party, whose sympathies were all with the Reformation and the Apostolic type of faith, are now of no account. Their trust is now in our hands. They have clung to establishment at the cost of their faith, and their cry here and there is as the cry of the bittern by lonely marshes and by a shore deserted of the sea. The faith of the Church has become divided in the main between Erastianism and Anglicanism. And each of these types misrepresents the Apostolic type. The Erastian faith is so little Apostolic that it can easily submit to the control of natural religion as represented by the State. And the Anglican faith is so much more than Apostolic that it interposes a faith in the Church and the priesthood which tends to make these more opaque than transparent for Christ, and more impervious than open to the Spirit. It is foreign to the Apostolic age and idea, and in practice it has a result which, were it realised, would grieve some

of its holiest advocates by putting the Church between the soul and Christ in a way that separates rather than unites.

We have, then, three types of Christian piety—the Evangelical, the Ecclesiastical, and the Ethical. But the Ethical, Erastian, or Broad Church is rapidly becoming absorbed in the Ecclesiastical. The Evangelical, as I say, has been relegated mostly to the Free Churches. So we are left with two great types face to face—Evangelical and Ecclesiastical. How comes it that these are almost synonymous with Nonconformity and Establishment? History may answer the question how; but why should they be? I dare not claim for one type of faith a complete monopoly in Christ's grace. I dare not say of the more ecclesiastical type of faith what it says of us, that it is invalid. For I will say there is much suppressed evangelicalism, latent but labouring, in the sacerdotal and sacramental creeds of grace. But I may well enough, I think, ask whether it is involved in the nature of Christian truth (I do not speak of political justice) that one type of Christian creed or character should continue to be distinguished by the special stamp and favour of the State which is common to us both. Or, if any type were selected for State purposes, why should it, *on Christian principles*, be that which puts less rather than more stress upon direct contact with Christ, and individual control by Him? Why should our common State be more closely identified with a Christianity which is of Christ because it is of the Church, rather than with a Christianity like ours, which is of the Church because it is of Christ?

It is easy to see why the State should prefer the one to the other. The one is much less tractable for State handling than the other, and has been so from the Puritans onward. But is there any ground in Christian

principles for the preference? I am not asking the question on the grounds of political justice, but on the religious ground, which starts from the revelation of grace and the nature of faith. The whole mischief lies at root in the perversion of the idea of grace from something evangelical, moral, prophetic, apostolic, into something sacramental, priestly, ecclesiastical, and institutional.

We stand in the line of the Prophets and the succession of Apostles in this matter. It is not because we are of the Church that we are of Christ. That is our broad mark. We belong to the Church as a consequence of belonging to Christ. We aim at being such Churchmen as Christ makes us, rather than such Christians as the Church makes us. Our cardinal principle is faith's independence of any authority but Christ's—*i.e.*, any authority but its own. For to us faith is the soul's response to Christ. It is more. It is Christ in the soul, especially in the Christian community. Nothing less and nothing else. The authority for a body of believing men is the will of the historic, ever-living Christ in their midst. It may degenerate in the absence of prayer and humility into self-will—as with us it has often, often done. But the risk of that is at least no greater with us than in Parliament, or in Convocation, or in a Council of the Church, or even a rectory. If anybody says there has been no self-will and self-seeking there, he does not know things. And if he says we have not Christ in our midst to guide, rebuke, and inspire, he must claim a monopoly of Christ's favour far more arrogant even than his monopoly of the State's.

Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free. And remember that no freedom of Church is of any value unless it flow from freedom of soul, and continually produce and express the same. Which freedom, again, flows from the releasing work of the Saviour

of the world. It is faith that makes the Church more than the Church makes faith. And it is faith or the want of it that decides a Church's fate, and finally a State's. It is a great, wide, royal matter, this of faith. Oh, yes, faith is a great and lordly thing. It is a great thing and a lordly no less than a precious thing, comfortable and dear. It has the true imperial tone and way. We have, perhaps, lost some sense of this grandeur, and so we have lost ground with men, and possibly even with God. We have lost spiritual imagination in connection with much of our faith. The spell of a great, old creed, ritual, or institution, is not wholly æsthetic. The grandeurs and commands of spiritual reality are in it too. We have gained in enlarged views and human sympathies ; but have we gained in depth of vision and range of faith ?

We have discarded a great Church system and ritual. Yet while we kept a great theological system we had some of the impressiveness which such organic greatness always exerts on the general mind. Now we have largely discarded that system, and we live on the middle and minor realities, and, if I may so say, on the lateral rather than the upward sympathies. We find all systems "little," while yet we have not realised the personality behind them as the Lord of a spiritual universe and the source of a spiritual majesty which gives the food some systems did to the spiritual imagination.

But the public, the democracy, has imagination—more than it knows, or we allow for. A bald church, like so many of ours (take the prayers alone), will not greatly appeal to it, nor even will a church merely sympathetic. It is not to be had with mere cakes and ale. It should be remembered that the democracy does not consist of a single class, even though that class may be in a majority. For the future we must not lose sight of the fact that there is a

rapidly growing section of opinion shaped under influences represented, for example, by the various forms of University extension. To this element we shall have to appeal in a way that at present we do not. It is an element which by its education is only made conscious of forces which are at work widely, if vaguely, in the public mind. And it is an element that does not gravitate to us. What have we to act on the great public, on the spiritual imagination, as the great systems do, as the ancient Church does, as the venerable ritual does, as, in a sense, even the House of Lords does? Have we not lost a measure of this element out of our conception of Christ Himself? The homely may have belittled the holy. The dear Christ of the Gospels—has He not obscured for some of us the great Christ of Ephesians? The prophet of the Kingdom has hidden the Founder of the Kingdom on the Cross. The infinite eternal meanings of the Cross, as the focus and measure of the spiritual world, have paled somewhat, and with them the due, vast, solemn sense of the Church as resting on it. We must return to pore with thought, no less than heart, on the Cross, for the great sake of both Church and Kingdom among men.

IV.

We Disown the Prince, the Prelate, the Priest—and the Individualist.

In coming to a more particular statement, let me put the matter negatively. The autonomy of faith and the Church, we have seen, is the positive principle. Now, what does it compel us to object to?

To those elements in particular—which I hope I may be pardoned if I put in a mnemonic way as The Prince, The Prelate, The Priest.

I. We object to the position of the *Prince* in the Church. To-day that means the Premier, and ultimately the public. Such is the modern version of the Royal supremacy. There is surely something wrong with the spiritual condition of a Church based on the New Testament when it is prepared, and even proud, to accept its highest officers at the nomination ultimately of the public, and directly of a man who may not even be (and sometimes has not been) a Christian at all. This is the more striking when we remember the extraordinary spiritual powers ascribed by the Church to the bishops and their due succession. It may be a godless and immoral Premier that selects the person through whom the episcopal virtue is to be made to go, with all its tremendous spiritual prerogatives. Surely this, which is of the essence of the system, shows its fatal incongruity. The public may select its Premier and put up with what it will in his character; but that the great officers on whom the very *esse* of the Church is said to turn should owe their succession, even possibly, to such sources

is a scandal which the Church surely cannot long endure. No man, as a mere citizen, has a right to place or influence in the Church, not even the chief citizen. "The Church," says Vinet, "has no citizens but such as she snatches from the world." Every believer is a citizen, but every citizen is not a believer. The national Parliament has other work and another spirit than the parliament of the Church. Indeed, Christianity is not national in spirit. Its conception is catholic and universal, transcending and submerging national differences, "elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth." One does not wonder at the demand for the revival of Convocation among the High Churchmen. We only wonder how long they will continue to refuse to pay the only price at which it can be bought. I mean their support and control by Parliament. How long will they give a Premier the place and influence in the Church implied in his selection of the Archbishop himself? We believe in lay control, but in the lay control of Christian men—in nothing so unblest as Parliamentary Church rule. It is the most extraordinary of anomalies. And it is only tolerable in a Church which is described by Newman as having become, under the tactics of political parties, a "tame Church," a sort of jackdaw to dance about their lawn with clipped wings. I would not have used this illustration had it not been employed by the real moulder of the present tone of the Established Church, and supplied to me by the young section of High Churchism in the book I named last week. Newman was shocked at this state of things, and shocked into the bosom of the Church of Rome. And it is a striking commentary on the boast, which, however, has of late years died on the tongue, that the establishment of the Church is the great bulwark against Rome. The Roman section of Nonconformity in this country has good reason to support, as it does, an Estab-

lishment which feeds its case and its ranks so well. Submission to the prince or the public lowers the pitch of the Church's soul, and prepares it for the more spiritual, subtle, deadly, and demoralising submission to the priest.

The principle of the autonomy of faith prescribes that neither Prince nor Premier shall be head, or even be called head, of the Church; but only Jesus Christ, in His direct access by His Spirit to the soul of the Church in the souls of the faithful.

It is said that the Established Church is peculiarly fitted to be an expression of the English national character and genius, as much so as Presbyterianism is for Scotland.

The answer is:

(1) This is no reason for its being established, but rather the contrary. It can trust the more to that national character of which it is so fit an expression.

(2) It is not such a complete expression of English character as Presbyterianism is of Scotch, else the Free Churches, with their different spirit, organisation, and ritual, would not have been called for to save English religion, as historically they have done.

(3) The Established Church is too complete an expression of one side of the national character; and, much as it has done, it has done too little to educate and chasten that character. You find some of the most offensive aspects of the English character expressed and unrebuked in the Church that should have erased them; its insularity, its arrogance, its contempt for other churches, and its Roman spirit of imperialism and monopoly all over the world.

(4) The English character owes more to the Church than the Church owes to the English character. It was the Church that made the English State much more than

the State the Church. There is a dignity and grandeur about the Church in its historic relation to the State which should prevent its ever stooping to State control and State subsidy. The Church is not so decrepit yet that it should abdicate and live upon the State, its child.

II. We object to the position of the *Prelate*. We do not necessarily object to Episcopacy as a legitimate and often beneficial form of Church government. I, at least, would not say anything so foolish as that Independency must be the universal type of the Church because it was the first. Historically the episcopal type has the longest history and the widest extent. But there is no such Divine right about prelacy as would justify the State, which is the State of us all, in conferring special favour on it alone; even if the State had, what it has not, the faculty to discern religious truth and Divine guidance in Christian affairs. Episcopacy is but one of the three great forms of Church government, and is probably no more deeply rooted in the New Testament than Presbyterianism and Independency. And we may go farther and say that, so far as concerns the *practice* of the New Testament, the churches of the Apostolic age were independent churches. The diocesan and monarchical bishop is unknown to that age. The New Testament bishop is the presiding officer of single churches. I am a New Testament bishop. He was chosen by the Church—certainly not outside. It is one thing to be an officer of the Church, and another to be an officer of the State in the Church. The one is a possessed man, the other is more like a man in possession. I will not say that *in certain historic circumstances* the diocesan kind of bishop may not be the most useful for the service of the Church. There is certainly nothing in the New Testament which consecrates the original Independency as solely right and

essential for all time. But there is continual work and need for that primitive form. At least, it is just as Divine as Prelacy. It has a right so good, both in New Testament precedent and principle, that we must raise constant objection to the claim that another kind of policy is essential to a true Church.

The diocesan bishops are not the successors of the Apostles. That is a fiction, without fraud, by which a particular form of Church order was carried back to the antiquity of the Apostles, just as the late Levitical priesthood in the Jewish Church was referred to the venerable institution of Moses. The bishops are not the successors of the Apostles in any sense different from the apostolicity of your own ministers. For (1) the Apostles had no successors. They were unique. (2) Scientific, and especially recent Church history lays bare the gradual process by which the diocesan bishopric grew, and by which the prerogative of the Apostles was transferred to it *after a lapse of time* for the sake of doctrinal orthodoxy and authority. (3) The idea and function of a bishop are quite different from those of an apostle. In the apostle the inspired element is foremost, the element of ardent faith, spiritual insight, missionary zeal and power, and the inspiration of growing piety. "In the 'Didache,'" says Professor Armitage Robinson, at the Church Congress of 1895, "the chief figures of the Church were not bishops and deacons, but apostles and prophets. The apostles were missionaries, and their gift was for the outside world; the prophets' gift was for the Church itself. They spoke under immediate inspiration; and it was implied that, if a prophet were present, he would supersede all others in the celebration of the Eucharist." The apostle was primarily a preacher, a man who owed his position to his soul and his power with the soul. His grace was the

grace of a spoken Gospel, and his sacrament was the sacrament of the Word, not the elements—of the Cross, not the altar. But in the bishop we have the idea of an officer. He was an officer at the outset, and the idea of him remains such. He is an administrator, not an apostle. That quality remains more characteristic of us Nonconformist bishops. The bishop, as such, can only be called apostolic when the idea of grace has been separated from the effect of the Word or Gospel, and associated with the sacraments in the Roman and magical way. The doctrine of the Apostolic Succession is much more Roman than Protestant. Indeed, Harnack shows that it originated with the Church at Rome, and was riveted on the Church when pagan ideas of priesthood were added to the apostolicity of the leader. And it is much more ecclesiastical than Christian. It is not in the New Testament. And if it were, it is so latent, so inferential, there that it has no right to the place claimed for it by those who place in it the essence of a true church. It has always seemed to me a strange thing that, if the unbroken transmission of the Apostolic gift were a *sine quâ non* of a true Church, neither Christ nor His Apostles should have been at more pains to institute a form, some precaution, or guarantee, of valid transfer. And the Apostles seem to have been singularly careless about the episcopal unction they are supposed to have had. They never magnify it, or treat it as a trust to be scrupulously guarded and entailed on a long posterity, as surely they ought to have done if our case is wrong. They themselves do not seem to put us in the wrong. We are Scripturally right, surely, in saying that, in the sight of Christ, Dr. Dale was as truly a bishop as his dear and illustrious friend Dr. Westcott, and much more so than some that recent history exhibits. The matter will never be in the New Testament condition till

our friends have risen to say, "We recognise your bishops, and look to you to recognise ours." As, indeed, all other churches do, but the victims of this proud fallacy.

Touching this matter of recognition, I have two things to say :—

1. The only satisfactory recognition is the recognition of us as churches on an equal footing with the Episcopal Church as far as right goes and as far as grace goes. We have an equal right in the Saviour, and we have received at least equal blessing from Him so far as results go. Our faith is our claim, and our history is our credentials.

And this involves the recognition of your ministers as ministers of Christ's Grace and Gospel by a title equal to that of any who prefer to stand in the Episcopal line. I reciprocate with all my heart the friendly and neighbourly attitude shown by many of the clergymen of the Established Church. I reciprocate their treatment of me as a prominent layman, and, I would fain hope, a high-minded fellow Christian. I am not going to throw away such a precious instalment as that. Nor am I to deprive myself of the pleasure and sympathy of such friends. But when the whole truth has to be said, it amounts to this, that the position can never be truly Christian till we are regarded as much more than prominent laymen, till the constitution and the authorities of the Episcopal Church do what so many of its best clergy are ready to do as individuals. The Episcopal Church, as a Church, must rise to recognise the ministers of the other churches in exactly the same way as the ministers of the Free Churches recognise them and each other, and open their pulpits to mutual service. Till that come, we must go on our way, and prove by our Christian life and work that it is deny-

ing the Holy Spirit to deny the reality of our church fellowship and the validity of our ministry.

2. The second thing I have to say on this matter of recognition shall be a quotation from an address by Principal Rainy, of the Free Church of Scotland, given in this very town of Cambridge a few years ago. He speaks of our readiness to recognise the Church standing of Episcopacy, and he alludes to the fruitless efforts made by the Anglicans to secure recognition from the Greek and Roman communions. And what he says is this:—"Is it not worth the consideration of Anglicans that they occupy this singular position? They will not recognise the Church standing of those who recognise them; and they only recognise the Church standing of those, Greeks and Latins, who will not recognise them. Is not that an odd kind of Catholicity?" It is very odd. It is something else than odd. For the rich madame, who will not recognise people in business because she is set on being recognised by the old aristocracy who snub and ignore her, is not only amusing, but, when she parades her religion as the reason, she is—let us say—pathetic.

We have been invited to re-enter the Established Church on condition that we accept the historic episcopate. Why is that point not conceded to us and left open? Because the High Anglicans consider it as the essence of a church. That is to say, we are to be received on condition that we satisfy the section of the Established Church who say that, being without it, we are not churches at all. We are to enable them to say that we have forsworn our present character as true branches of the Church of Christ. How came a body of bishops, who *should* understand English religion, to make such a proposal? "We will take you in, but you must disown your ancestry and family." Truly has it been said by Principal Rainy, in

the same address: "The principle of Christian unity is violated by no other Protestants in the world as it is by the Protestants of the Church of England."

III. We object to the *Priest*—the word, and the thing. The word is deliberately and uniformly avoided for Christian ministers in the New Testament. The idea is foreign to the Apostolic doctrine of grace. I cannot here go into the detail of this great and grave question. The supernatural powers claimed for the priest, in so far as they are different from the supernatural grace in all Christians, are another survival of paganism—possibly transferred from the pagan mysteries. The early Church drove it out at the door and took it in at the window. Can you think of the greatest of the Apostles as a priest—the man who thanked God he did not baptize, and who said he claimed no domination over his converts' faith, but aspired to be a helper of their joy? I say, boldly and briefly, there is no person on earth who has a better right from Christ to pronounce the absolution of sins than your minister, whoever he may be. That is a privilege of every forgiven and believing Christian. Every Christian is a priest. I know that we have often treated the priesthood of believers as a charter of unchastened individualism rather than an entail of unworldly sanctity. But our principle is true, however poorly we may realise it. And if the Church think well to appoint certain of its members for the convenient administration of sacraments, and for the stated public declaration of forgiveness, that gives these ministers no right which is not capable of being exercised upon occasion by every true Christian, lay or cleric. I do not understand what is meant by the non-validity of sacraments or offices which are not administered by a priest in the episcopal succession. Is it said that the value of the Lord's Supper you receive at

my hands is not real, but fictitious? Is Christ not as really present in our Communion as in that of our neighbours a few yards off? What does your experience say—and the experience of millions besides, who have found Christ as near and gracious in their Communion as any could who took it from episcopal hands? Our baptism, I believe, is admitted to be equally valid with theirs. Some of them say, indeed, it is more valid than we have any idea of. But what validity has it that our Communion Service has not? It is strange that the sacrament whose grace we know as surely as our opponents can know anything religious, should be denied a validity which they concede to the sacrament whose effect is not a matter of conscious experience at all.

The place of the priest in the present and growing condition of the Established Church is alone a sufficient reason to make Nonconformists. It is the flat contrary of that direct access, spiritual equality, and godly individuality which belong to the essence and autonomy of New Testament faith. It becomes too absurd when we are asked to believe that a priestling, raw from his seminary, possesses, in virtue of his ordination, a grace and power in Christ's name which do not belong to the holiest in outside communions. He can make his sacraments more valid than Dr. Fairbairn or Mr. Spurgeon could, or Dr. Maclaren or Principal Rainy, or any of our mighty men! The thing can only be believed either because people do not think, or do not feel, or they accept the theories of men who work under a rigid and unspiritual logic, based on scholastic methods and mistaken historic data. Surely, when the religious life of the Church has become what it will be, when its State connection has ceased to chill and contract it, a theory of this kind must die of simple exposure, Christian manhood must rise up against

it. The *minister of the Gospel* will be more honourable in Christendom than the *priest of the Church*, and the Sacrament of the Word be more precious than any word of the sacraments.

These are some of the leading reasons why we are Nonconformists. Our schism rests on just the same right as that of the Anglican Church from the See of Rome. And it has been blessed by God with at least equal results. We are equally churches in Christ's sight and service, and our orders and sacraments are of equal validity for the soul, if we will make them so. When that is admitted it will be time to discuss reunion in one form or another. But none is possible while one church claims monopoly. It is a claim out of date. It is a relic of Protection. It makes a certain disputable form of faith a protected industry. It puts what is virtually a social and political bribe upon that form of church faith and life. And, what is worse, it brings in its train the torpor, neglect, and corruption of monopoly. The competition of the Nonconformist churches has done much for the revivification of the Church of England. And if that competition, that Christian rivalry, failed, the Establishment would chill the Church down again to the condition in which last century left it. When will the Episcopal Church realise the enormous advantages to be had by discarding the claim of monopoly, and accepting the cordial hegemony of the churches? She would do far more as the *doyen* of the other communions than as their superior.

In all I have said I trust there has been nothing calculated to wound or offend any of the communion I criticise. Fools and snobs you find in the Church as in the world, who treat equality as presumption. Bigots and babes you find, who treat discussion as insolence, and meet argument with browbeating. It is among these you find

the people who think and speak of Dissent as vulgar, especially the Dissent they were reared in. To offend such is a seal of well-doing. But among those who hold their Churchmanship on the lines of convinced intelligence and Christian affection, and who love their Church much because it is to them the will of Christ, whom they love more—if among those I gave pain I should be deeply sorry, and I would do much to remove the offence, if it were only in the way of putting the matter, and not in the matter itself. For, I repeat, it is a matter of conscience, and the conscience of Churchmen. In our own case we would displace one Church from monopoly because of our belief in that Church's future, and its power of becoming, under the like conditions with others, a glorious Church, with powers infinitely enhanced for serving the Kingdom of God in this realm.

There is plenty of room for criticism in our Free Churches and their members, and it is better that we should pass it upon ourselves. In most of our church constitutions there are defects which only prove that we all need each other (even if we are not all needed on one spot at once). And in many of us there is much misunderstanding of our true idea of freedom and independence. But at least we are growing willing to be, as churches, members of each other; to help each other to help the Lord against the mighty; to seek our chief unity in the Saviour, and in the work of making Him King of England. How long shall one great, godly, and unfortunate Church stand outside, and try to feel above this holy alliance? How can she expect to be the Church of the people while she regards as she does the churches of the people? How long before she realises the withering effect on her own soul of this anti-catholic monopoly,

this denial of the communion of saints and the Churchmanship of the faithful?

I say the Lord make that Church mightier than ever, and fuller of the Holy Ghost. For all growth of such might means death to the things we oppose. It means the removal of what are now the entrenchments of privilege, and therefore manacles of the Spirit, and bonds not *for* Christ but *upon* Him.

Our prayer for the spiritual growth of that Church is as honest as prayer should be. For every step in such growth is a step towards the freedom without which a church cannot do its own work, however well it may serve a State. And it may be doubted if ever our outside efforts at such liberation will take effect till the end of it is as urgently felt within as without. "Who would be free themselves must strike the blow." Some of our efforts have had the effect of closing up the ranks of our opponents. I do not say these efforts should cease. But I do ask whether we can do no more in a positive way to prove that our energies are those of the Spirit which makes *the Church*, as distinct from a missionary or benevolent society; to show more clearly that it is really church freedom we have at heart, not individual or political chiefly. My observation leads me to doubt whether all of us have really measured, for practical purposes, and with a statesman's eye, the depth, intimacy, and passion with which the Established Church interpenetrates, happily or unhappily, our social system and our national life. I doubt whether we have gauged the grounded thickness of the walls of Jericho, and whether our trumpets are all at the right spiritual pitch. I doubt if we can effect what we must always attempt, until there is an answering note from within. And that note, that echo, we shall not provoke by anything short of a religious enthusiasm as

social, real, pure, and high as that which gives the idea of a church with our opponents such a power. It is not enough that we should be ardent for the Christian spirit in public or private affairs, nor for social righteousness, nor for liberty of thought (which some sections of the Christian world seem to care more for than they do for the object of thought). It is not even enough in this great conflict that we should be ardent and sincere in devotion to an historic Christ, or even to a living Christ. We must realise that an historic Christ cannot permanently or powerfully be for men a living Christ without the Holy Spirit, which means a holy, historic Church for its vehicle. Individuals or single communities may seem to thrive upon a mystic piety which is independent of church life, or, it may be, upon a social ardour which is social in everything except its religious expression. But it remains true that the living Christ is only realisable on an historic scale by His action through the living and historic community of a church. Christ's goal is only to be reached by Christ's Spirit. And the Holy Spirit can act upon the main stream of human history only by spiritual communities. It is true enough that the Spirit has action and effect outside the churches. But the Church, as the moving area of the Cross, is the real base even of these operations. And it is still more true that it is through the Church that the Spirit effects the conversion of the world into the Kingdom of God. The Church, moreover, can only be reformed by a self-reformation. Our effort to bring about the reform of Disestablishment can succeed only if it is an effort of the Church to throw off a disease of the Church; that is to say, only if we who pursue that end approve ourselves no less, but even more, really than our opponents holy churches and true abodes of the Holy Ghost. And it is matter for self-examination whether we have at all

lost from our Church life the note of sanctity; or whether we have developed it as the growth of the unholy around us demands; or whether we cultivate it in some wrong, unhistoric way in introspective coteries, which are but new sects in the making.

I am not going to enter on a discussion of how much, if any, change must pass for our purpose upon the *face* of our churches. But there is one change of *spirit* that must take place, or rather must go on beyond the point it has happily reached. We must destroy the idea that the Free Churches rest upon religious individualism, and stand or fall with it. Let it be said at once that religion is nothing if not individual. Each soul must say "My God," and each conscience hear the words "Thou art the man." Let us not misprize the worth of individualism for faith in its proper place. Let us not underrate it. But our danger has been and is the other way. We overrate it. I have previously hinted how it has impaired our imaginative efficacy. But it has more purely spiritual mischiefs. If our Nonconformity is simply the ecclesiastical expression of an individualism which is already past its work in the social and political sphere, then we are an extinct volcano. Our protest has been made, and our useful work is done. We are fallen not only behind the spirit of the time (which need not be fatal), but below the spirit of our origin. Nonconformity arose, as I have already said, not in the restlessness of individuals, but as a protest of the Church. It came from men who believed more in the Church than in the individual, from men who held that the Church did more to make Christian individuals than these did to make the Church. There have been few such powerful personalities in history as these religious Socialists were; but that only writes in small what is graven in eternal form in Christ Himself, that the

mightiest personality in history was the least of an individualist, lost in His Father and His Kingdom to anything like the assertion of individual rights or selfwill. He lived, grew, died, rose—all in the perfect headship and fellowship of a social unity. And this tone is the note of the living and conquering Church everywhere. It is the only spirit that can do Church work, or effect Church reform. To go beyond our English ancestors, the Reformers who begat them were men who did all they did in the closest union with a Church and the deepest faith in it. They certainly did not believe that the Church was an *ex post facto* aggregate of saved units, a society formed at the option o individual believers who could be just as good believers without such association. A Church lay latent and imperative in the very nature of their faith. They would have said the faith that did not force a man into Church association was no real faith. They believed that the Christ redeemed a community, a kingdom, not just so many units who might or might not gather into a community. It was a community that Christ redeemed, and it is into this ideal community of redemption that as units we are saved. We are saved, as units, from being units, into a redeemed community, which must constantly take practical effect as a visible society. That was the spirit, at least, of the Reformation. It was not an outbreak of passionate individualism. Views may be individual, faith cannot be. It was an outbreak of the conscience. But the man that says we are bound to be individualists because we have consciences does not understand the rudiments of the redeemed conscience. And the Nonconformist conscience he misrepresents. It is just our conscience that will not permit us to be individualists. Our Christian conscience is there, not simply to erect us into sturdy stoics, mighty

moralists, veracious intractables, and champions against mankind; but to reveal Christ as its Redeemer. And Christ is inseparable from His Kingdom. It is not conscience that is king, but Christ in the conscience. And in the conscience Christ not only breaks our rigid righteousness, our stiff integrity, and our pride of belief by abasing us into repentance and faith; but He comes in a Kingdom, He comes with His saints—

> "Never, believe me, appear the immortals,
> Never alone."

He comes with His inseparable Church. Our union with Christ is a communion of saints. If He be but Master of *you*, He is not a King. He is not a King who has but one subject. If Christ is the King of your conscience, it means that by your faith, by the act of His coming and rule, you are set in your place in His community; and you cannot obey His will truly, or do His true work, till you are owning that place in some real—however liberally construed—way. No vague sympathies with human brotherhood, no viscous faith, is meeting the will of Christ as fully as it should be met. The faith that does not "care to fix itself to form" is of little use to God or man till a body is prepared it. It is good only as poetry, or as promise of something less fluid. Its affinities are with the sentiments, and it has not the power needful for the control or consecration of passion. And this is as true of ecclesiastical as of theological form. In the New Testament, at least, the brotherhood which is considered identical with Christianity is the brotherhood, not of man, nor of his benefactors, but of believers. It is the Church—which remains for us still the great effective and educative middle term between the intense egotisms of our family affection and the vapid diffuseness of a spurious, and indeed impossible, love of the race. And it is not simply the

adherents of Christ, but the *members* of Christ chiefly, that have made Christianity possible to many who are only adherents to-day.

I dwell on this at the close for two reasons. First, because there is some fear that the Church idea has failed many of us in practice, some in sanctity, and a few even in theory; and, second, because the reality of the Church idea must be at the root of any reformation like Nonconformity, which does not aim at destroying the Church, but restoring and developing it. Individualism destroys the Church idea. It must be fatal to any Nonconformity other than political. We have only to make it quite plain that Nonconformity and individualism are identical to lose our case and our future. What we have to impress by the depth and reality of our own Church life is our faith that the Church which is established has a boundless future as a church, while its establishment has none; and a form of Church extension as urgent for us as any other is the extension inwards on us of the Church idea and practice. And it might be said in closing, that some of the ill-rewarded efforts now made among us to promote public socialism would be better repaid at the last if they were turned inward. They might seek to restore to us that spiritual socialism which is the nature and property of real Church life. And I mean Church life as distinct from the mere sum of those Church activities in which the spirit is expressed, but sometimes also frittered away. "While thy servant was busy here and there was He gone."

Our Nonconformity is forced to be militant. For, indeed, this is the badge of a true church everywhere. As one says, "She is not established in the world, but encamped." Let us not be satisfied, when we have left the world, to be mere camp followers of Christ. Let us press into the lines and help to close the ranks as "warriors of His Holy Ghost."

V.

The European History of Our Principle.

No voice from the opposite camp touches some of us Nonconformists more deeply than the appeal not to destroy the historic Church, but to turn again and claim our right as Englishmen in that ecclesiastical inheritance which has been so closely interlaced with our great career, not to say our very existence, as a people. We are not all unmoved, I say, by that appeal. When we linger in the venerable Abbey, now so significantly dwarfed by the huge Parliamentary fabric at its side; when we wander into one of those exquisite village churches in whose number and beauty England is so rich, whose dusky ceiling, resting on thickset Norman columns, is the true image of a piety which does not cease to be sweet because it is rustic and lowly; when we are met by the disarming spectacle of its clergymen offering Christian greeting to such periodical gatherings of Nonconformists as may visit the Bethel of his parish; or when we groan being burdened by an excess of extempore prayer, and turn our longing eyes to the most beautiful liturgy in the world; in such circumstances we cannot refuse to own the spell of the historic Church that once in our borders was sole. Nor can we put aside the yearning speculation whether ever again those roofs will cover, or those words utter, the united religious life of the nation, free in its faith, and re-welded in its soul. But even if, at the bidding of historic probability, we give

up such a dream, why may we not let ourselves go on the belief that the unity which awaits us in our religious future is nevertheless both large and sure? These venerable institutions are no mere antiquities, but prophecies. If no one roof can cover us, yet the Christian soul is never bereft of the shadow of the Almighty. If no liturgy unite us, we have still the common prayer in the Holy Ghost. If no one corporation embrace us, still we do not cease to be members of the body of Christ. A time will come—a historic time—when the name of Christ shall be more than the frame of Christ, of more constraining, more comprehending force, and the one flock more than the one fold. Is it not the case *now* that some of the views we most resolutely oppose are only held and pressed for the sake of Him whom we both call Lord? They are urged — like the episcopal succession — in what are believed to be the interests of the Holy Spirit, without whose continuity we admit no church has being or breath. Gather any assembly of people drawn from the deep though diverse religion of this land (and how deep the latent religion of our land still is!); if there could enter visibly to their midst the old, simple, solemn figure of Him who trod the waves in that spell of light which drew Peter incontinently from his ship, would there be an hour's hesitation—should we cling an hour to our vessel of Church or Sect, after the briefest utterance of His explicit will? At His first clear word all would go. Churchmen themselves would be content that the Church should perish if the Kingdom of God could only arise out of its fall, and the glories of His second temple only stand on the ruins of their first. Is it not so? Well, if beneath the strife of tongues and the war of systems so it be, is Christ Christ if, furthermore, from this tomb He do no

one day rise, and from being our buried power become our most effective and conscious principle? At last far off, at last to all, a time will come when the old unity of the fold shall be known to have been but a symbol and prelude of the oneness of the flock. And England, now the most divided of religious lands, will be but so much the richer in the various unity of a more subtle, searching, flexible, and commanding creed.

This is not meant for the vague optimism of a sanguine because inexperienced faith. The New Jerusalem does not come out of the clouds—except to Apocalyptists. Whatever is to come must arrive, as it has been doing, by the historic way. When appeal is made to us on the *historic* ground, I say, it moves us so because it is our mother speech, and because the past, the long past, is our native land. We, too, have a history. We are not simply

> "the latest breath of time,
> New men, that in the flying of a wheel
> Are born."

If it be a case of reverence for antiquity, tenderness to the past, and loyalty to the solemn thrones of honourable age, we have much call to be reverent and loyal to ourselves. We can fall back, not only on a history, but on History. We are not out of things. We are a part of all that we have seen in Christian story. The records of our body are one thing. Another and greater thing is the action throughout all the soul's history of the principles and forces for which at the moment we stand. We are not local, parochial, conventicular. We are not, in the genius and idea of us, provincial, sectional, schismatic, revolutionary, recent. We, too, can say

> "Mein Vermächtniss, wie herrlich weit und breit.
> Die Welt ist mein Vermächtniss, mein Acker ist die Zeit."

We have a continuous place in the Christian history of the soul. The principles now committed to us are principles which have been from the beginning entrusted to many witnesses, more or less faithful, long before English Nonconformity began to be. We claim more than the possession of a history. We claim to be in and of History.

None of us all can afford to be indifferent to historic continuity.

It is true, indeed—and in the region of the soul, the conscience, and the free will specially true—that we are not the products and victims of rigid evolutionary fate. We live by a new departure, an initial mystery. Our Christ is a great miracle. The region of faith is the region of miracle. Faith is but a response to the final and irreducible miracle of grace. Religion for every life has at least as much that is akin to revolution as to evolution. As in the individual so in the world, the great religious departures have been, for those who took them, in the nature of revolution, however much the historical science of a later age may level down events to the play of forces long prepared. If it be urged against Dissent that it is a breach of historic continuity with the Church of England, the same may be urged against the Church of England itself in so far as it professes to be a Reformation church at all. And if that be denied, as it now plentifully is, if the name Protestant be renounced for the name Catholic as the designation of the English Church, the matter is only moved back a stage. The most Catholic of Anglicans owns that the unique and miraculous nature of that first Church and that sole Saviour gives the true type of religion, and that they involved a decisive and creative breach of continuity with the Jewish Church out of which they rose. Revolution may be dangerous to States, and to churches in so far as they are States. But

the idea of the Gospel is one that has native affinities to change, and to new departures of a startling and inexplicable sort; unless, indeed, conversion be robbed of its reality, and reduced to a mere step in education. But this is just what the Church has steadily declared conversion, whether sudden or gradual, not to be. Our whole Nonconformist protest, at least, may, from one point of view, be described as an assertion of the *moral miracle* involved in conversion. We protest, on the one hand, against the *magic* miracle of Ecclesiastical Regeneration; and, on the other, against the view which regards the step from the world to Christ as a mere matter of education, divested of any element of *miracle* at all.

But when all this is reserved, it must be repeated that we, who rely so entirely on the unity of the Spirit, can least of all afford to be indifferent to historic continuity. The church that disowns its relations with the great past destroys the solidarity we all desire with the future, and throws away the influence that can only spring from broad and vital relations with the present. It is the churches with a long spiritual history that will appeal to the imagination of the future, as they have the strongest hold of the present. There are few truths we need to have pressed upon us for our ecclesiastical salvation more than this. But on one condition. By historic continuity shall be meant something very different from what the phrase conveys to Church lawyers or ecclesiastical politicians. There is a higher than documentary continuity, and one which, if our religion be true at all, is no less real. In these affairs there is a prestige other and more than constitutional. There is a legitimation which is spiritual and eternal. There is an apostolic succession which is much more precious and holy than the episcopal, and which, through many a breach of official succession, seeks its con-

tinuity in the indefectible unity of the Spirit of God. "Life's not Time's slave"; least of all the life of Christ and His Spirit in the world. But to seek the chief credentials of a true church in a visible historic chain, which is precarious at several links and outward in all, is to make the Spirit the slave of Time as surely as the old temple worship put Him in the manacles of space. There is an authority of the living Word and the living conscience which, for all its degradation in the freaks and conceits of raw individualism, is yet in its nature more august, and in its fruits more blessed, than long lines of episcopal kings.

What is the soul, the genius, the note, the idea of that religious movement which has already a venerable history and inspiring tradition of its own as English Nonconformity? Is it freedom? If we use the word freedom, we are under this disadvantage. To the general mind it is a negative idea. What is thought of is freedom *from* something, and only in a very secondary degree freedom *for* anything, except perhaps individual preference. It is hardly wonderful if a strong suspicion and distrust of such freedom should arise in the minds that idolise order, and have taken but that elementary step which consists in prizing corporate and palpable unity. It is one of the misfortunes of our disjointed and transitional time that there is amongst the enthusiasts of freedom, in many cases, a more vivid sense of what is cast away than of what is gained by the new liberty. It is a liberty of revolt rather than of knowledge. But if anything is to restore the solid *ground* of freedom, it should be religion. If anywhere men may look for the gift of freedom in a positive sense, it is surely to the gospel of the Church that their eyes should turn. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there, and only there at last, is liberty. Somewhere, surely, the Christian Church still has the secret of

that *for* which the soul must be free, if it is to be free for any good. Freedom is a spiritual principle. It is a regulative principle, not a license and a luxury. The Free Churches are those that in their genius and tendency (whatever the defects of their practice so far) give most definition, food, and scope to the spiritual principle in the soul. If there be such a principle, it can have but one place and one rank. It is the supreme and royal principle in human nature and human affairs. Its place is the throne, its sphere is affairs, its organ is conscience, its law is in itself, and its power is of the Eternal. Instead, therefore, of saying that the genius of Nonconformity is spiritual freedom, it may be more correct to put it thus. The idea of Nonconformity, if we look away from its foreign and imperfect forms, is *the autonomy, supremacy, and ethical quality of the spiritual principle.* This is the greatest of Heavenly purposes, the loveliest of earthly dreams, the most undying of historic forces—it is the Kingdom of God. Every true church is an agent for the promotion of that Kingdom. Every church is false in so far as it claims to *be* that Kingdom. Hence Nonconformity is not a church, but a movement among churches. It is an aspect rather than a section of the Church. And it becomes amazingly active in the very bosom of the Established Church itself at every period of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. It is the Pentecostal principle in the history of religion, and it flames afresh in every age when the soul most glows in its redeemed sense of mastery over the world.

The antiquity of Dissent is thus something much more hoary than our own protest against the English State Church. It dates from the first great outpourings, I will not say of the Spirit of God, but of the Spirit of God's Kingdom and God's Christ as the revelation of

our human destiny and of that Will Divine which is our peace.

Our opponents, when we and they are in the genial and jesting mood—which, perhaps, would not hurt either of us if it were less rare—suggest that Dissent had its origin in Eden. We modestly forego the claim, and deprecate an antiquity so high. But if our critics are disposed to go so far, they cannot well avoid going farther, and seeking our source in that secession of the rebel host which is written in the book of the wars of Jehovah known as "Paradise Lost." But, though reputable clerical catechisms expressly trace our origin to Satan, our present object is not mythical, it is historic. Let us not be extravagant in our ancestral claims. Let us go no further back than our first great champions in the records we unite to call Divine, the first great tribunes of the people of God, the first who directly speak to us of the politics of the new realm—the prophets of Israel.

I. The antiquity of Dissent begins with Hebrew prophetism. Here are two verses from a chapter which is like the narrative of the sufferings of a very early Puritan (1 *Kings xxii.* 13 *&* 14):

"And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah, the son of Imlah, spake unto him saying: Behold now, the words of the prophets, declare good unto the king with one mouth; let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them and speak good. And Micaiah said: As the Lord liveth what the Lord saith unto me that will I speak."

No tuning of the pulpits for Micaiah by any visible head of the Church—be it the king on the throne, or such a hydra-king as to-day in Parliament claims the odious function asserted in a Public Worship Regulation Act.

Prophetism may have produced the Law, as some say, but it is still more true that if it did it went on to protest against the empire of its own creature. It went to war

with the Law in the supreme name of spiritual conviction, present inspiration, and public righteousness. In the name of the Kingdom of God, it defied and deposed kings; it denounced the unprophetic prophet; it was almost in a standing feud with the policy and the ritual of the priest. Like the great monks, it ignored the priest, or curbed him; it bearded the throne; it bent the monarch to its will, or broke him on his refusal. The Jewish Law represents the Established Church of that day. Its greater part was ceremonial rather than moral. Its genius, on the whole, was ritual, sacrificial, outward, and downward. It represented the heathen* element in religion. Prophetism for that day meant the Christian element. It meant Dissent—and in its first period a very political Dissent. Its word was righteousness, not ritual—personal piety and national righteousness. The only religion it burned to have established was the fear of God in the soul, and the obedience of God in public affairs. Nay, when at last the nation broke, the Kingdom of God still survived in the one soul of Jeremiah; just as in later days, and in the final collapse, it was narrowed, in still holier form, to the one soul of Christ. For the Kingdom of God, what is it but the Son of God in multitude, as the Son is the Kingdom in a soul? Not the nation, but the soul, was henceforward to be the subject of the universal religion—the soul at close quarters in Christ with its object in God. Prophetism was thus the first great Nonconformist movement in the history of our faith—and it was the marrow of the faith. It stood for what we nonconformists stand for now—the autonomy, the supremacy, and ethical quality of the spiritual principle. It stood against king and priest, State and Church, for the true Kingdom and free Word of God.

* Using the word distinctively, not invidiously.

II. The prophet failed from the land. Scribe and priest carried the day. The professions rose to power in a decayed, but not uncultured, realm. The people that had refused the prophet and his word became a paradise of proud ecclesiastics and petty priests. When, once again and once for all, the spirit of prophecy leaped to Heaven in the white flame of Christ. Christ did not expressly break away from the Church of His people. It broke away from Him, instinctively. He followed, till His ejection, the only Church of His day; but He was no good churchman, this Head and Centre of the Church. He sat very loose to it. Only twice He alludes to His own Church, while His Kingdom is always on His lips. And His great antagonists came to be the Established churchmen of His time—the Pharisees. I use the word not in the offensive, but in its true historic sense. Organic connection between Church and State means Pharisaism. The Church kills the Word. Law and order kill Gospel. Christ was persecuted by the patriotic churchmen of His age, and by them finally slain. The true incompatability of their principles became clear. He *was slain* for Church interests, though He *died* for the Kingdom of God, for the autonomy, supremacy, and ethical quality of the spiritual principle of the soul. If it seem a bold, and even to some a tasteless thing to say, must it not be said—Christ was Nonconformist? If we could not say it, should we have a right to stand for Nonconformity in the name and pale of Christ?

III. The like thing took place in a form still more express in Paul. Paul was the first great Christian Nonconformist. In him the spiritual principle came into the most explicit collision with a national church. He strove long to adjust Jesus to the Jewish Church. But he had too truly and centrally grasped the mind of Christ. Like

Christ in one way—like Luther in another—he was carried of the Spirit into an antagonism he did not go out to seek. A national church means but a nationalist religion. It is in its essence Judaism, and in Paul the Christian principle broke with that once and for ever. A State church, moreover, as a creature of the law, falls into the category of those works of the law to which the Gospel must be in subjection, no, not for one hour. The first classical treatise on the principles of Christian Nonconformity is the Epistle to the Galatians. Incorporate the thought of that Epistle with your spiritual intelligence, and you are a Nonconformist in soul, be you in an Established Church or out. And may we not say that wherever direct and intelligent communion with the Redeemer becomes the general habit and tone of a mass of men an established church becomes in due time intolerable. It falls into the category of "elements" and outgrown rudiments. For the Puritans it did so, and for the Methodists. And it will only be for lack either of moral courage or of "lucidity" if it does not become so for the Anglican Catholics. Newman, by the just contempt of his spiritual genius for the *via media*, has shown them the living way.

IV. There is one epoch in Church history to which the Anglicans look back as to a golden age. It seems to them to embody the pure and typal idea of the Church. It is the age of the first three or four centuries. This is an instinct true and right. The early Church grew up in independence of the State, either neglected by it, or noticed only to be persecuted. It was autonomous in the sanction of its order and ordinances. It recognised in its institutions none but a spiritual authority. The canon law of the later Church is a ponderous and complex fabric, but it had its rise and its "note" in the evangelical principles and autonomous pre-

scriptions represented by Paul's guidance of the communities in his care. It did not owe its origin to the action of the worldly power, but to such independence as forbade Christians to seek redress in pagan courts. The Church at large was an independent Church, composed at first of independent Churches. And if it be said that this was but the rude and inchoate condition of a church designed for lordlier things, that is a remark which is not quite consistent with the high, normal, and even final, authority allowed to the Apostles, who seem content with such an order of things, or even enjoin it.

The early Church was, in its constitution at least, a spiritual body. Yet it was not sacerdotal, strong as its tendencies were in that perverse way. Dr. Hatch tells us how the votes of laymen helped to settle the issue in some of the great doctrinal Councils. And the development of doctrine otherwise shows us how independent the Church of that day was of the worldly principle. During the first period, when the deepest, broadest lines were laid down, the growth of theology was of a more purely evangelical order. It was not reason adjusting faith to a pagan philosophy. It was faith giving account to itself of the thoughts which moved as currents in the glowing stream of its own apostolic inspiration and Christian enthusiasm. The first and most characteristic growths of Christian theology were as independent of Greek philosophy as they were of the subsequent political intrigues which played such a part in the shaping of orthodoxy. They were the results of spiritual thought working on its own practical and saving experience of the Gospel. This was so up to Origen at least. The Christian stamp and quality were placed upon the theology and the constitution of the Church before its contagion either from the philosophic schools or the imperial throne.

V. But the world was not ripe for ecclesiastical purity yet. The dream of empire ruled the hour. Rome had already found that the spirit and prestige of the great Julius slain was mightier over her destiny than his living presence. It had transformed the Republic into an Empire. So the empire itself which that spirit framed died into an influence vaster and subtler still when it died and rose unto Christ in the imperial Church. The very spread of Christianity made it the religion of imperialists, and slowly the pagan notion of the omnipotence of the State flowed up like an evil tide upon the Christian spirit. The bureaucracy of the State inspired the management of the Church. The invincible Roman genius of administration was enlisted in the service of the Christian organisation. The deity of the Emperor, the symbol of imperial unity, was translated, like many of the pagan idolatries, into the service of the Church, and the throne, as *pontifex maximus*, became its head. Religion had always been at Rome a department of State administration. The priests were civil servants. Priests always are, till prophets force them higher. And priestism was already powerful in the inexperienced Church. It had its usual contempt for the worldly power which it would utilise. The State was in itself an unholy thing, in the eyes of Augustine and his successors at least, but it was held to receive a consecration from its association with the Church. The step of A.D. 320 may have been historically inevitable; but, alas! the universal experience soon began to be realised. The Church lost in spirituality more than it enabled the State to gain. It became worldly in the dream that it was becoming universal. The City of God was no more foursquare every way. What it gained in width it lost in height. Striving to be one and catholic, it ceased to be holy and apostolic. Such was the fruit of the fatal trans-

action with Constantine, so full of public *éclat* and innumerable woes.

VI. But while the secularisation of the Church grew under priest and king, Christ was not left without a witness. His Spirit grew also in reaction and protest. The counter-movement came in twofold guise. And to us latter-day Protestants it seems to have come in such a questionable shape that many, on the old lines of viewing Church history, have failed to recognise it as our protest at all. But it was so none the less. In *Monasticism* on the one hand, and in *Romanism* on the other, we have the forms assumed by our own protest in the conditions of that age—the protest for the autonomy and supremacy of the spiritual principle.

1. *Monasticism* often enough took an extravagant shape, but it was, in its object, nature, and inspiration, the Non-conformity of the day. It was the glow of reaction which resisted the chilling of the Church to the temperature of the world. The monks fled to escape from the settling down of the Temple of God to the level of a political institution. They represented the Dissent of the time from a Church which was rapidly becoming a sacramental establishment or a juridical institution. The hermits of the Thebaid were the true Church in the wilderness. They retired not only from the world but from a Church where a high Christian life and the pure vision of God were becoming impossible. From the priest they retired no less than from the court. What the Christian public was more and more coming to receive at the hands of a priestly caste, the monk, cut off from Church ordinances, won by the perilous travail of his lonely soul in his cell—namely, peace with God. Was that not Puritan in more than its severity—in the directness of its spiritual principle? It had its grave dangers. It was not the ideal.

It was only a protest on behalf of the ideal. But the truth of its spiritual principle is seen in the amazing growth and influence of the monastic movement, especially when transferred into the more vigorous conditions of the West. From first to last the great history of monasticism is the record of protest and battle against the State control of the Church—protest which came from a body organised on spiritual principles outside the Church. It was only by the aid of Cluniacensian monasticism, as we shall see, that the monk Hildebrand established the spiritual power of the Church above the Empire. And it is the Jesuit monks since the Reformation, persecuted and dispersed though they were even by Rome, that have saved Romanism from the European dynasties, and set the Papacy above the Church itself—and, by so far, above the Empires too. Monasticism has made both Henry IV. and Bismarck go in a sheet to Canossa. It is a great feature of the Roman Church that it has so often discovered before it was too late what to do with its Nonconformity, and how to turn it to account—a lesson that some other churches, for all their long experience, have never learned at all.

2. Newman had more of the spiritual genius than either Pusey or Keble. The Church of Rome rests upon a more truly spiritual foundation than the Church of England. *Romanism*, at the period I have spoken of, was the second form of the Nonconformist principle. The growth of Romanism was, in those circumstances, the growth of spiritual Christianity. The bishopric of Rome was a spiritual power compared with the Imperial Court. And more and more the influence of the Roman Bishop had to be asserted against Constantine and his successors. We are familiar with the bold stand made in the same cause by Ambrose against Theodosius in the portal of Milan. And the removal of the court to Byzantium was like a subven-

tion of Providence to the independency of the spiritual power. Rome was released from the Emperor's presence, and the Church was set free to be itself, to know itself, to be popular, and to discard the oriental despotism and august seclusion of the imperial ruler. The Roman Bishop in particular found room to grow into the Emperor's great opponent. And between the two, who that has at heart the autonomy and whole future of the spiritual principle in the world can hesitate with his sympathies? Rome, it has been truly said, then saved the independence of the Christian Church. Being the centre of the world, Rome became the leader of the churches, and so, inevitably, the champion of the Church; she was yet far from the time when she became the Church's seductress and her tyrant. Romanism is one thing, and may, without vigilance, become dangerous enough; but Papalism is another and infinitely worse. Do not spend on the one the hate and censure deserved by the other. And do not forget that the power of Rome, at its origin, lay in its nonconformity, in its protest for spiritual autonomy in the face of the State.

The influence of the Papacy grew. It was all but inevitable that it should. It was a crisis calling for dictators. One powerful head and hand was required to combat the head and hand of the absolute Emperor. The monarch's claim to be head of the Church has always called forth in necessary antagonism the leadership of the Pope. Every assertion of State Churchism is a new impetus given to Popery. Those who talk of a State Church as a bulwark against Popery may read history, but they do not appreciate it. Ever since the ominous transaction of A.D. 320, history to the spiritual eye has been a wavering battle between two powers that could neither part nor agree. Each in turn has won the mastery, and each has brought

in its mastery but a variation of curse. Call them Church and State if you will. But an exacter notion may be conveyed by what seem more pedantic terms. It was Rome against Byzantium to begin with, and the long conflict may be fitly described as the struggle of Byzantinism and Papalism. Byzantinism describes any system whose aim or whose tendency is the subjection and utilisation of the Church for the purposes of the State. Papalism is the inevitable shape of the system which aims at or tends to the subjection and utilisation of the State for the advantage of the Church. For a millennium and a half, in one shape or another, the long conflict has raged. But it is not the length of the battle we grudge. Eternal issues are not settled by single Armageddons. What the world and the soul grow utterly weary of is the bitterness on the one hand, and the barrenness on the other, of the European strife. It has been prodigal of mischief, sterile only in blessing. And it is this weariness, this barrenness, this mischief that are driving men in increasing numbers and vehemence to declare that the real cause of the strife must lie in the effort to wed things alien at heart. Opinion is growing in every land that there is but one remedy, obscure as its form may be, and difficult its application—the total separation of Church and State. Historic necessity thus leads to the very goal to which we English Nonconformists have been driven by our positive conception of the true nature of Christianity as the autonomy of the spiritual principle.

VI.

The European History of Our Principle.

(*Continued.*)

Let us take a bird's-eye view of History, and watch from another point the surging of this great fight. We may mark four or five phases of it, movements large and passionate, swaying men in millions, and taxing some of the great commanders of the race.

There are five periods in the world-history of the Church seen from this point of view.

1. First of all is the initial movement, to which I have already alluded—the Antenicene period, down to the Council of Nicæa in 325. It hints forcibly, as in a prelude, the true idea of the spiritual power. The Church is independent without having become imperial. It is true to its own spiritual genius, its own corporate and self-determining power. Abuses, indeed, were creeping in—especially in connection with the priesthood and sacraments. The pagan idea of the State was preparing to submerge the Christian, and the pagan and the magical idea of priesthood was already at its debasing work. Still in the main the genius, apart from the theology, of that age was true. And, but for its paralysis by the State connection, the Protestant and self-corrective element of free Christianity would have rectified other errors and abuses in due and natural course. Let the Church alone with its spiritual freedom, and it will always return to adjust its own compass at the Cross. This first age is the Church's

Eden and "angel infancy." And, as is often the case, its childhood is the only period for a very long time in which it is its spontaneous and unworldly self.

2. The second period begins the divided consciousness. Amid its Eden the church has its temptation and fall, and it goes out hampered into the world. To the historian this may be a step onward; to the moralist it is at the same time a step downward. The connection with the Empire of Constantine wakes the intestine strife. The mind of the Church is divided, its voice is uncertain, and its step is unsure. Cain and Abel, as it were, are born, in the shape of Byzantinism and Papalism, for fraternal war. And first it was Byzantinism that had the field. Worldly and shrewd rulers from persecuting the Church took to patronising it, and even to persecuting paganism in its name. Like a great new province, it received the imperial franchise, and became an integral portion of the Empire. What strategists these Roman administrators were! They enlisted the powers they could not afford continually to oppose. They enlisted the Church, as the Church learned from them to enlist its monks. They turned the clergy into a black regiment, as we did with the Soudanese. Worship became (as it is with us) a State-regulated function. The clergy (as with us still) became the devotees of a dynasty or of a party, and the foes of national feeling and popular progress. Both the faith and the people (as now) were distrusted, except as bridled and regulated by what was in its nature a foreign control. The Church was accordingly secularised to the level of the world. Its popular aspect and element were suppressed. Its spontaneous initiative was crushed. The autonomous and spiritual quality in the Lord's body was lost. This is Byzantinism. It is like our eighteenth century prefigured in the fifth or sixth. This is the genius of the State

Church, which is sceptical of the Church and credulous of the State.

The first cycle and golden age of this tendency culminated in the great name and realm of Charlemagne in 800 A.D.

3. If Christianity could have died, it would have died then. But its immortal soul had another body prepared, its free spirit found a fit tenement and living Word. From Byzantine imperialism the reaction was equal and opposite. Choked in one channel, the Spirit made another. The growth of the Emperor developed the resources of the Pope. Always, I repeat, a State Church feeds the power of the Papacy—unless escape is found upwards into the Free Churches which have saved England, or downwards into atheism and anarchy as abroad. But in the then circumstances of Europe the Pope was not only a present necessity, but for the future a blessing.

The connection with the State had given the lords spiritual a power and prestige which became too strong for the fealty by which they held them. Being so much, the ecclesiastics felt they were more. The power lent by the State only made them realise how far they were above the State. The lust of rule was at work in the Church, no doubt; but there was more than that. When we say motives are mixed, let it be with more thankfulness for the presence of the better than regret at their contamination by the worse. One remembers all about the forged decretals and such like tactics. But these could not create an idea. They were created by it, like "agitators." The Church, chafing at the State, made honest appeal to a true Christian resentment at the prostitution of the spiritual power to political purposes. If there must be an Empire, it should be spiritual. If the spiritual was a reality, it must be autonomous and supreme. So

against the Emperor rose the Pope. Papalism won upon Byzantinism, overtook it, left it behind. A force was met by an idea whose hour had come. And with the hour came the man. One of the great captains of the race appeared at the end of the thousand years in the person of Hildebrand. Where did he find his forces? Not in the ranks of the Church regulars, enfeebled by their captivity to the State, but in the auxiliary forces of the Dissenters of the time—in Monasticism. Cluny saved Rome—nay, Christianity. The supremacy of the Pope, as the spiritual power, over the Emperor, as the political, was established on that famous January day, at Canossa, in 1077, when Henry IV., divested of his imperial robes, and fasting from morn till night, stood in barefoot penitence amid the snow outside Gregory's gates to beseech the removal of the spiritual ban. The Concordat of Worms, in 1122, took the spiritual investiture of the bishops from the Emperor, and secured the Church's independence of the State in principle at least. But the supremacy of the spiritual power did not culminate till the papacy of Innocent III., in 1200. The bold claim he made good was, "The Lord has given to Peter not only the Church, but the whole world to rule." The fall of the Hohenstaufen, about 1250, was the end of the imperial phase of Byzantinism, and the crown set upon the Empire of the spiritual power. The State Church made room for the Church State. In idea at least the soul was seated on the summit of the world. Nor in effect were the results despicable. From the dark ages of Byzantinism Europe had passed with the empire of the Papacy to the incomparable 13th century, which perhaps only the 19th, with its spiritual sensibility and aspiration, has learned, late though truly, to prize. It was the golden age of mediæval piety, art, philosophy, and mysticism. It was much that it should not have been,

but it is a landmark of the soul. It reared Dante, Giotto, Aquinas, Francis of Assisi, and Gothic art.

4. The Catholicism which gained such victories was popular in its sympathies. Hierarchical as it was in its form, it was yet democratic in its instincts. It pruned the oligarchical exclusiveness of the Imperial despotism. It appealed to the broader humanities of a true Church. A new spirit of popular nationality was breaking upon Europe, and resenting the monotony of a European Empire. The Church was in tune with the rising note. It was with the future. The spiritual idea that enthroned the Pope was at root one with the national ideas that chafed at the Emperor. Spiritual autonomy went hand in hand with national independence, which it is the genius of a State Church (paradoxical though it may seem) at the long last to destroy. It was only when the Pope in his turn became an Emperor that the two forces parted, and nationality revolted from the spiritual head. That hour was not long in coming. The Papacy had won its battle as the champion of the Church; it proceeded to enjoy it as the Church's master. The curia became as absolute as the court had been. The Pope turned out to be much more true to the genius of Rome than to the genius of the Church. He was more Roman than Catholic. He was more a successor of Cæsar than of Christ, of the emperors rather than of the Apostles. Need I describe the growing paganism and concurrent despotism of the Papal court? Spiritual autonomy was lost in Papal autocracy. The spiritual *principle* was merged and lost in the spiritual *power*. As Byzantinism had called forth the triumph of Papalism, so the abuse of the victory was preparing a new triumph for Byzantinism. But for Byzantinism no longer in its imperial form. The nations had taken the place of the Empire, and the era of national churches was about to

begin. It dawned in the great 15th century Councils of Constance and Basle, with their fruitless efforts to release the Church from the Pope by calling in the aid of united nations. But it leaped into day with Luther. It came at last with a crash. Papalism had arrested the native evolution of the Church, and the usual result appeared in revolution. The Pope had become for the Church an intestine emperor. His court was an *ecclesia in ecclesia*. He could only be got rid of by something like rebellion and civil war, which came in the Reformation. In its *nature* the Reformation was the reassertion of the spiritual principle, with its ethical autonomy, against the Church State. It was not due mainly to national independence. Nor was it due to the revival of learning, as, with plentiful lack of religious insight, some have ably told us. This view represents the keen but cold-eyed judgment which is the natural product of a State Church, which in Scotland used to be called moderatism, and which at its best is but rationalism with the chill off. Moderatism misses the very keynote of the Reformation. The inspiration of that movement was spiritual autonomy on ethical principles—the free religion of the forgiven conscience, the experimental liberty of the redeemed. If it was anything, it was evangelical. It lived and moved in that deliverance of the soul from sin by the Cross, which is the very charter, principle, and vital air of the Free Churches, and which makes Free Churches inevitable wherever the ardour of redemption gains upon the decorum of culture, or the idolatry of law. Turn again to the Epistle to the Galatians.

But the ultimate applications of the spiritual principles of the Reformation we have not reached even to-day. We are only discovering how much more potent and permanent, even for theology, is Luther's religious

inspiration than his theological scholasticism or his political compromise. The ecclesiastical principles of the Reformation were not, and could not be, understood in its first years. The social results of a great faith are its last results, as they are its last refuge when it is in decay. Souls were still ridden with the superstition that only in one Church could there be salvation. And so the weapons they took up to fight the Church State were either a Presbyterian form of itself, as in Calvin's Geneva, or a return to a variety of State Churches instead of one. A new era of Byzantinism set in, adjusted to the fact that the Empire had become the nations. The imperial head of the Church was replaced by the national heads of the churches. The civil rulers were accepted in the political circumstances as the spiritual heads, both by Germany and England. The era of State Churches and State wars began. It is an ominous conjunction. What it has brought the churches to may be seen from the fact that never has a State gone to war, justly or unjustly, but it found its Church ready to back and bless it. And we have the repeated spectacle of two churches of the same Lord, and of the same universal peace and brotherhood, backing—not to say hounding—their patron States with the same confidence at each other's throats. Nay, we had great religious authorities voting for our last wicked Afghan war on the ground that it would be a means of introducing the Gospel to Afghanistan. That is cooking God's meat over hell fire.

What has the result of the new, the national, Byzantinism been? We have it before our eyes in what (except the growth of the Free Churches) is the most striking fact of modern Church history—the rehabilitation of the Papacy. That is the Continental expression of the same movement as in the British races breeds Free Churchism.

It is the old, inevitable story. Papalism thrives on Byzantinism. The State Church, instead of resisting Rome as a bulwark, resists her but as the fulcrum resists the lever—to give it purchase and power to act. The Byzantinism of Charlemagne bred the Papal absolutism of Hildebrand; the Byzantinism of the post-Reformation churches breeds the Papal infallibility of Leo XIII. What was done for the Papacy by the monks of Cluny in the Middle Age has been done by the monks of Jesus in our own. And the differences are as striking as the analogy. The Jesuits have subtler methods than the Cluniacensians had. We are in a subtler, and, in many ways, more spiritual age. So much the Reformation has done, even for our unbelief. The spiritual power, therefore, to survive, must make a subtler claim. And all the difference of the two ages is expressed in the gulf between Gregory's dream of empire and our Leo's claim to spiritual infallibility while his empire falls about his feet.

Are the national churches weapons fine and flexible enough to cope with this tremendous spiritual power? Are the political methods, which in a parliamentary church must be, in the long run, supreme, are they of a sort to deal with this foe? Its temporal empire is falling from it, and it is now less the foe of nationalities than of the soul. Romanism is at war, not with Protestantism, but with spiritual intelligence. Can a political church fight this enemy of the soul? Can a mere national, and therefore sectional, church cope, in these cosmopolitan times, with a Church whose dream is still a universal Word, whose sway has still the universal note, and whose historic steadiness of policy and marvellous consistency of principle are matched by its calm ecumenical uniformity of aspect? It can no more be done by a national church than by an international atheism. The epoch of national churches is

drawing to a close with the aristocratic epoch in which they rose and grew. A State Church cannot consist with a democracy. The *Spectator* has made the bitter discovery. There is more hope of a democratic Papacy. What form is now left for the spirit of Byzantinism to take, to meet the new claim of the Papal power? Shall it have another form? Bismarckism tried a throw with Rome, and failed. The young Emperor is muzzling his clergy in a way they resent with shame. Is there no scope but Rome for spiritual autonomy? Is there not that other great phenomenon of modern Church history, the Free Churches, to give safe expression to the spiritual protest whose form in Popery is so deadly? Have we not had enough of the long, the interminable, see-saw of Church and State, which would cease if the rigid connection between the extremities ceased? Shall we saw the plank?

5. The political completion of the Reformation has been entrusted to England, and America her child. Only in England, with its political genius, have the spiritual issues of Luther, and especially of Calvin, been carried forward ecclesiastically without fatal arrest. So far as concerned the relation of Church and State the Reformation at first meant a relapse to the lower ground of Byzantinism. It did so particularly in England. But for that reason, perhaps, it was just in England that the spiritual reaction against Byzantinism was most decided, and the soul of the Reformation received in Puritanism its most practical and congenial shape. But Puritanism, within the Church, because it was Evangelical, was driven to be Nonconformity outside the Church. It has been so with Methodism. It has been so with the spiritual logicality of Newman. Must it not be so with Anglicanism? A State Church is no comfortable home for the liberty which is in Redemption, or the autonomy that is in

Christ. It has housed many true champions of poli ical liberty, and many more of philosophical liberty and freedom of thought. But neither of these is the liberty of the Gospel, the soul-emancipation of the sinner at the Cross. The Evangelical release, which was the breath of the Reformation, has pushed its way through the reluctant Puritans to its logical result of Nonconformity. It is a pity this designation is so negative. For the movement, with its many defects and extravagances, is simply the most pure and practical expression of the autonomy, supremacy, and moral quality of the spiritual principle. History has convinced us by its barren oscillation that that end is only to be secured by the separation of Church and State. History, and not the Dissenters merely, is working out this freedom. We do not aim at the dissociation of politics from religion. That, unhappily, has been virtually done by our opponents. It is one of the very worst results of a State Church to demoralise and disintegrate State and Church alike. We aim at the restoration of politics to religion. We would separate politics from theology, indeed, but not from religion. While we have much sympathy with the Roman claim for spiritual supremacy, we repudiate one fatal fallacy in the Roman idea—the undivinity and absolute secularity of the State. From Augustine, who introduced that error into theology, to Aquinas, who authorised it, Rome has been concerned to save the State from the devil only by organised subordination to her holy self. Her shadow would lend it a consecration not its own. In like fashion she has treated the basis of the State, the family. Accursed in itself, it is only blessed in her. We, on the contrary, hold the family in itself to be the portal and the State the forecourt of the Kingdom of God. And it is not the Church which consecrates God's Kingdom, but the Kingdom the

Church. The Roman claim, however, is not utterly false, but only partial. Rome is the "hierophant of an unapprehended inspiration." The truth of Rome is nonconformity—the freedom of the Spirit to organise life into the righteousness of love. Rome, as the spiritual *power*, is but the historic envelope of the spiritual *principle*. The Papal claims are but the earthen vessel. The treasure is the Spirit's supremacy. The Roman Church is the pitcher veiling the lamp. We have come to a battle where the pitcher must be broken, and we must move by the naked light of the Lord. English Nonconformity, in the genius and idea of it, is the deliverance of the spiritual *principle* from the spiritual *power*. It is the redemption of the Kingdom of God from any identification with Church or State. It would deliver civilisation from Catholicism, and Catholicism from civilisation, for the sake of God's empire in the soul. It stands for nothing arbitrary or fanatical, nothing novel or pulverising. It is not the consecration of schism. It is for spiritual autonomy, ethical piety, and the religious, but never again the ecclesiastical, organisation of society. It rests on the redeeming Cross and the delivered conscience, not on the light of nature, nor on the heart's impulse, nor on a vague faith in progress. It subordinates tradition to conviction, and institutional piety to personal certainty. It submits everything to the direct obedience of the living Christ, and orders everything by the free movement of the living but historic Spirit.

I do not go into the history of English Nonconformity. What I strive to impress is that we are not making a protest and stand of but three centuries old against one particular Church. That would narrow and sectarianise our contention. Venerable as our national record is, we are in a yet older line, and sustain the ends of an older world.

We represent not a particular church, but a side of mankind ; not so much a theology as a spiritual idea, a moral tendency, an inspiration with a theological core. We represent (alas, for a large part unwitting of our meaning) the great principle which, from the dawn of a supernatural religious life, has been in conflict for the mastery with the natural man and the kingdom of the world. We have, it is true, a particular, a national, a political significance. I stop for a little to urge it. Perhaps we have lost or forgotten it to our cost. We have made modern England. Nay, more, have we not been the chief makers of the modern State ? We have made municipal and civil liberty in these islands. Who denies that ? But it is not so widely admitted that it is we who have done most to make the modern Constitutional State. The modern State began in the constitutionalism of the English Revolution. The English Constitution has been the pattern for all the constitutionalism of Europe. But the English Revolution would never have taken place, it would certainly never have been pacific and exemplary, but for *our* fathers and *our* principles. But for them it would have been bloody, destructive, and politically as sterile as the French Revolution has been. It is to the religious politics of our spiritual progenitors that we owe the freedom now enjoyed even by the irreligious. We have taught religion to tolerate its own opponents—a triumph that the Church with its conformity never won. Churches are in their nature intolerant. Perhaps they ought to be so. We have a "jealous God," a sole Saviour, an absolute law. But then their nature is spiritual, and their sanctions moral. When they are political churches their intolerance means disunion in the State and destruction. It is our religious revolt from the Church that has made a State where political union survives spiritual difference, and where

freedom robs irreligion of the mischievous prestige it draws from disability and persecution. It has been well said that in the Reformation Christian development passed from the exclusively religious to the moral form, from the ecclesiastical to the ethical type of social union. Man was delivered from the Church into the Kingdom of God. That is true. But it is chiefly in English lands that that has taken place ; and it has been by the force of the true Reformation current in English Puritanism and Nonconformity. I do not say that we have always been conscious of the greatest aspect of our work. But that is God's way with His greatest agents. Nor do I say we have had the complete monopoly of this task. Switzerland, Holland, America—wherever now we have the freest lands —they all began on our principle of putting civic and constitutional freedom on a religious basis, and so on a basis conservative and safe. Robespierre, Napoleon, and the slavery of Europe are the end of revolution in countries with a State religion ; William of Orange, and the imitation of Europe are the results of it on Nonconformist lines.

We have, then, a national significance which has been, and may yet have to be, nothing less than the salvation of English freedom, and so of national existence. We have a European significance as the chief source of the modern Constitutional State. But my main contention is that we have a larger significance still. We have a real and continuous place in Christ's great world-controversy, in the long tissue of the soul's history, in the militancy of the Universal Church. We may have been provincial in our mental dialect, thanks to the refined cruelty of those who barred against us for generations the gates of culture ; but we are not sectional in our spiritual tradition, nor sectarian in our Christian descent.

If we seem to drop into the limits of a sect, it is because our principle has gone forth beyond us, and permeated masses to whom our church order is strange. Nonconformity, as a spiritual principle, is no longer the gospel or the task of the Independents alone. Independency is a church order, and one of many which are members one of another in the Universal Church. If it has priority in time, it has no Divine right. It cannot be sole. For a complex age, and a vast community, it has drawbacks as well as blessings. But our Nonconformity *is* of Divine right. It cannot rest till it be the determining principle in actual public fact. It has all the Divine intolerance of an ultimate spiritual principle. It has become a huge force in the spiritual earnestness of our age, and a powerful factor of the spiritual future. Our Independency will suffer nothing from rising to the dimensions of our Nonconformity, resuming its national place, and acquiring those large spiritual habitudes that are the mien of the Kingdom of God and the gait of the freemen of Christ. We shall have plenty to do, and dignity enough in the task, if we set ourselves to keep religious in soul the great movement which had in soul-religion its native air. Our mission is not primarily political. We leave that to the State Churches. Their nature is political. Our mission is primarily religious and spiritual. It is political only on occasion and by consequence. We wage spiritual war with a political institution which in its nature is unspiritual, and which is fast becoming anti-national. But the Church itself is more than political. The Episcopal Church will survive the Establishment, and indeed of all the sects has most to gain from the change. It is maintained by the most honourable of its supporters on more than political grounds. Even premiers within its Erastianism have

lately changed their mood, and for a generation have used the State for the benefit of the Church, rather than the Church for the benefit of the State. They have used our common State for the benefit of their peculiar Church. They are doing it in the region of Education now, as they have done it in other regions they have had to resign. Their methods show how honourable men are demoralised by religious privilege to do as churchmen what they are above doing as men. No wonder the battle of Dissent is harder, because subtler, than it was. But what does that mean? It means we must retreat upon our reserves, and realise that our protest, after all, must be fundamentally on religious grounds, on the same kind of grounds as are making the State control nearly as galling to Church as to Dissent. We must make it felt that we are only concurring in our own way with the true Catholic protest, and putting it in a purified form which is as germane to our historic situation as was Hildebrand's in the face of the Imperial throne. We must be truly national, because still more truly Christian.

Words hardly serve me as I reflect on the blight it is to our national resource and influence, this unchristian anomaly and historic anachronism of a privileged Church, with the monopoly of our English name, the prestige of the nation *we* saved, and the exclusive favour of our common State. Perhaps this division, taken all in all, is the greatest embargo that lies upon our national power and progress. Ireland is bad enough, and we know it; but this is worse, because it is subtler, and we do not know it. Our religious life is the core and spring of all our public success and glory. And it is cleft to the centre by a social gulf far wider than principle demands, a gulf purposely widened by one side to prevent co-operation. And from both sides of it our national soul is

bleeding away into the void, while our national vices are lusty and free. The "leakage" in the "services" is as nothing compared with what we lose by this open wound, which is draining away precious juices that should rehabilitate our moral life. The nation is not itself—its whole and possible self. We have the curse of a religious war under a crust of courtesy, often broken, and often no more than polished contempt. In the great uniting Name we have veiled civil war. We are two religious nations, if not in effect two religions, which, even when they are only neutral to each other, are proportionately cold to our common King. Who is to blame for this? Whose is the refusal to close the Christian ranks against the world and settle our differences in the rear? England has done many things wonderful, if some fearful; but what might we not do and spiritually be, with the intense depth and energy of our common religious life, were this division at an end and a free circulation restored to the whole body? Our national unity is yet incomplete. Begun in our self-assertion against the Papacy in the middle ages, the long welding process has yet to be brought to a close; which can be satisfactorily done only by the healing of that grievous breach in our spiritual unity. We need not become one body, but at present (in spite of sporadic exceptions) we are not in practice one spirit. And God's curse is on that, whoever be to blame. It may be left to each man to infer from the probabilities of the historic situation whether the result desired is likely to come about either by the decay of Nonconformity as a historic freak, or by the abandonment of its cause as a stage outgrown.

I will not dwell on the bitterness that will never cease to be generated while this anomaly lasts, nor on the demoralisation involved in petty social persecution and

the importing into solemn national questions, like education, of the corrupt and grasping tactics of vulgar electioneering. Nor do I enlarge, on the other hand, on the narrowing of our Dissenting vision, nor on the penurious humdrum which came of our having to fight every inch of our room to live. And I only mention to lament it our suspicion and watchful jealousy against brethren of the faith whose public position tends constantly to quench their excellent personal chivalry and charity. What I deplore most is the paralysis of Christian enthusiasm and energy on both sides, the huge loss to spiritual England all round caused by this dark fissure in our national soul. It is in the soul and its unity that all great things grow. And it is a spectacle that can hardly be treated too seriously—our national soul in civil war, one half of Christ's disciples in this realm ignoring, ousting, despising, insulting, and occasionally, in the rank and file, hating the other; while that other is not only tempted to suspicion and unreasoning dislike, but robbed of the blessings it might gain, were the chief historic Church of the country released from its false position of monopoly, were it taught to seek but an honourable hegemony, and were its spiritual treasures thus made free and fascinating to all. It is not enmity either to the Church or to its treasures of the Spirit that inspires the movement against the secularisation of religion involved in a State church. That is so in this country at least. It is not in the name of no-religion that the State-religion is assailed. Enough has been said to show that it is done, at bottom, rather in the spirit and power of Elias, in the name of that prophetic and Evangelical Christianity which has repeatedly saved the faith from both the monarch and the priest. Were the choice only between the Establishment of Bishop King and Disestablishment by Mr. Labouchere, the mind

and soul of the country would soon be made up. But why is our movement in danger of slipping into such hands? Because the dull vision of the Erastianised Church has never seen, respected, or utilised the value of the spiritual protest she must continue to evoke. We Nonconformists understand the Church a great deal better than the Church understands us. When we ask the Church for the sake of unity to sever its connection with the State we do not ask it to annihilate itself. But when it asks us, for the same sake, to accept its historic "Episcopate," how hopeless the gulf seems. Does it not know that it is asking us to desecrate our fathers' graves, and then perform on ourselves the happy despatch? A political church becomes much more shrewd in its steering on a given tack than swift to discern the spiritual weather that prescribes the general course. It tends constantly, also, to be more engrossed with the salvation of the ship than with the safety of the cargo or even of the crew. Leaving metaphor, it is constantly tempted to surrender the autonomy and purity of its spiritual inspiration to the exigencies of the political connection. As a result its corporate instinct grows dim in regard to large spiritual movements, keen as the sight of many of its members may be. And if it wake up at all, as in the Church Reform movement it has done, it awakes, as it were, but with one eye, and with that too late in the day. The spiritual and national value of Dissent has been to a certain extent recognised by that section in the Church, but it is a section powerless against the inveterate temper of the Church majority, and the dimensions now of the Nonconformist host. And some, even of the most generous and Catholic of the Church reformers, are men who understand little of the *principle* of Nonconformity. They accept the principle of a national

church. They would only increase its generosity and comprehension to those that are without. They seem to make national unity the ground of spiritual. We put it just the other way. It is no question of comprehension. It is a question of principle—the native relation of the spiritual principle to the worldly power. Christ said His Kingdom was not of this world. The Established Church, *quâ* established, is. Let us secure the principle, and the true comprehension will automatically settle itself.

It may safely be said that irreligious attacks on the Establishment can only strengthen its position by giving it all the prestige of martyrdom. Religion assailed by no-religion is persecuted; and a persecuted institution wins a new lease of life. If mere secularism succeeded in disestablishing the Church in one generation, it would raise so much sympathy for it in many of the best quarters that there would be some danger of its re-establishment in the next. The Pope cannot be hopeless of France, and if Paul Bert had lived he might have been surer still. Religion, after all, has been the chief factor in establishing the Church. Religious feelings, however mistaken, chiefly maintain it. We do not seek to disestablish Christianity, but only outgrown conditions and stages of Christianity. If the Church is to be disestablished, it must be done at heart in the power and spirit of religion, because it is believed to be the will of the Church's Christ. The secret of a free Church can only be the secret that frees the soul in Christ. Nonconformity could not exist but for the Gospel. I do not say that no part is to be played in the event by the mere sense of political justice. Political justice, even in non-religious men, is a religious thing. But it is less religious than the interests which are the burthen of the Church. The root of public righteousness is the forgiveness and righteousness of the Cross. The

love of the Redeemer is the mainspring of the Kingdom, and the Church should be tried by its peers. It should be disestablished by the action of its own central force. It should be proved to injure the Gospel even more than the Empire, and to debase religion more than it dissolves the State. So serious a step as Disestablishment would assuredly be viewed as persecution if it were not inspired by motives of equal dignity and solemnity with the principles which to the Church itself are most dear. The forces that are to bring about this grave change in a Christian body should be more than pagan, and older than Radicalism. They should have a historic continuity which is more than a match for the Church's own, and a Christian foundation no less holy. Such a foundation and such an antiquity are not wanting to the Christianity of Dissent. It is our duty, as religious Nonconformists, to pursue Disestablishment as a step in the Universal Church's reformation of herself; to keep the forces which are to end the religious monopoly in living relation to the Cross of Christ. We must assert that the saving principle of freedom in the State is the same principle which saves and frees the guilty soul; that the only establishment of religion in a nation is the establishment of its spirit in our common conduct, not of its machinery in a sectional institution; and that churches and nations and all other institutions are alike but the agents, and never the peers, of that mightiest force in action on earth—the Kingdom of God, which is but the social aspect of the Son of God.

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